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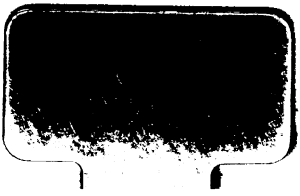

CHRIST'S THOUGHT OF GOD

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CHRIST'S THOUGHT OF GOD

TEN SERMONS PREACHED IN WORCESTER CATHEDRAL IN 1919

BY

JAMES M. WILSON, D.D.

CANON OF WORCESTER

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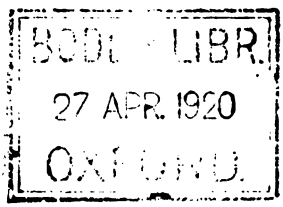


TO THE YOUNG AND THE HOPEFUL, THE REVERENT AND THE OPEN-MINDED, THROUGH WHOM GOD WILL EFFECT THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE AGE

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK

WITH MY PRAYERS

PREFACE

THIS short series of sermons is an attempt to speak to a congregation on the most fundamental of all theological and philosophical questions—man's conception of God. No justification is needed for having preached on this subject. Men's thoughts are being directed to it more widely than ever before, and they do not know what the Church really means to teach about it. Much of what the formulas of the Church and much of what the Bible itself seem to imply, they frankly disbelieve. Yet the clergy seem to them to accept all such language as on the same level of accuracy of expression, as the Christian thought of to-day. Some are perplexed: many are alienated.

I have quoted in one of the sermons

the saying of a soldier in hospital: "I'm a Christian all right, Padre; it's what the parsons say about God that stumps me." Did he not go straight to the root of the matter? I am sure that the subject of our conception of God cannot any longer be rightly avoided by us clergy in our ordinary preaching and teaching.

But the publication on such a subject of anything so imperfect as this volume does need justification.

One justification is this. Men's conception of God has always been a theme of philosophers and poets and mystics, as well as of professed theologians. And their labour and devotion have not been in vain. Some of us feel that such writers, whether avowedly Christian or not, have helped us to understand Christ better. It could not be otherwise if "in Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." And we ask ourselves, and we are asked by others—Cannot the effect of these varied influences and studies be used in the pulpit and lecture-room more

freely than they have been, so as to strengthen the faith of those who have no direct access to those studies? Can the present confused conception of God be regarded as final? Can we think of it as that of Christ?

But if the conception of God as presented by the Church is to be purified, magnified and glorified till it approaches to Christ's own conception; if faith in God and devotion to Him is to be concentrated, and not diluted, by philosophy; several conditions seem to me to be plainly indispensable in the method of presentation.

One condition is that in speaking in Church to people who meet for devotion, or in schools or elsewhere to those who meet for Christian teaching, we must start from Jesus Christ. "Other foundation can no man lay." We must shew that our faith and our thought are the results of an honest and careful study of Christ's words and the whole New Testament. In a University lecture-room, on the other hand,

a man may start from where he will; and he can scarcely fail to throw some light on Christ's teaching. But that is not the method for the pulpit or the schoolroom.

Another condition is that we shall use language to which people are accustomed in devotion, and avoid technical terms which, though more precise, are not generally understood. The deepest thoughts can, I believe, be made perfectly intelligible to an ordinary congregation of adults and adolescents if we ourselves have such a grasp of the thoughts that we can express them in simple language.

There is a third condition. No mere negations should be expressed. The early and childish anthropomorphic conception of God which produced and haunts some of our formulas and devotional language, which is now perplexing not a few of us, and moves to scorn our Rationalist critics, must not be simply denounced and abandoned as false. It is not false. It is a great truth expressed in primitive intel-

lectual form and imagery. Its value, emotional and devotional, must be preserved at all costs except that of truth. It is a hardly won, priceless heritage of the ages with which the Church is entrusted. It is our duty, in this age of reconstruction, to act towards this conception of God as Christ acted towards the Law—"Not to destroy but to fulfil"; to fill the old phrases with more spiritual and searching meaning; to unfold, to develop. Crude conceptions need no denunciation. They pass away of themselves when they have served their purpose and are insensibly replaced by thoughts truer to experience. But we teachers of the Church must take care not to conceal from ourselves, or try to conceal from others, that they have passed away, and try to galvanize them into life.

We rarely need negations, but we do need living thoughts about a living God.

There are, however, other and more general reasons for publication, some of which may here be very briefly indicated.

The highly anthropomorphic language of some of the current and popular theology is destroying the credibility of the teaching of the Church. And we are to blame. Language of this type in well-known text-books is placed before our young candidates for Holy Orders as in fact the only expression of our Faith. Manuals of devotion are full of it. Poetry is treated as if it were prose, and symbols as dogma. Theology becomes unreal, mythological, when not checked by experience. Many clergy avoid its use; but they therefore avoid the deeper subjects of thought, for no other conception appears to be sanctioned. The lay-world is expectant, or it is alienated. That great lay-world is not less the home of the Spirit of God, the body of Christ, than ourselves. It is less fettered; it is not less earnest in its devotion to truth, or less able in its pursuit. It is, in fact, outgrowing us clergy: it is looking elsewhere for guidance and inspiration in things of the Spirit. Intellectual obscurantism may coexist with the

truest religious feeling, but it does not commend its faith to others.

We must enlarge our field of view, and it lies open before us white with a rich harvest. We have been learning in the last half century to be less suspicious of science, even to welcome it as a contributor, both in substance and in method, to our theology. Our Church must venture on a further step. It must not only lay aside language in formal teaching which is inconsistent with the progress of scientific knowledge and philosophical thought; but it must recognize as orthodox a conception of God which some will hastily identify with mysticism or even pantheism, but which is being more and more widely felt to approach to Christ's highest and final teaching.

When in teaching astronomy the geocentric theory of the solar system was replaced by the heliocentric, popular language remained unchanged. The sun still rises and sets; the planets still wander among the stars. But the terms used deceive no

one. The facts are accepted. So it must be in theology.

My Preface is already too long; but I cannot refrain from adding that the wrong mutual attitude and temper of the various bodies which together constitute the Catholic Church of Christ on earth, springs in part from crude thoughts of God. That temper can only, I believe, be purified of its exclusiveness and other faults by a profounder theology, which recognizes the Unity of the Divine Life in men, manifesting itself in diverse gifts and graces. The recognition of such a unity is not long compatible with the sectarian spirit. Such a theology will assuredly foster the dynamic impulse to more active and fruitful fellowship in the Spirit of Christ.

It is with such motives as these that in my old age I commit these sermons to the Press. They must be, after all, their own justification. I hope that they may be useful to some; and, above all, I hope that others, lay or cleric, will supplement them, and will in years to come elucidate and

enforce with greater insight than I possess that which above all things the Church now needs, a knowledge of Christ's thought of God.

JAMES M. WILSON.

COLLEGE, WORCESTER,
October 1919.

P.S.—Since my writing this Preface the Church Congress at Leicester has taken place. The note of all the sermons preached on the opening day was union in a truer theology.

The Archbishop of Canterbury said, "The supreme need of our nation at the present time is . . . a new understanding of God's character. In vast stretches of the nation the thought of God is barely Christian. . . . The need of the Church and the need of the nation is a living theology."

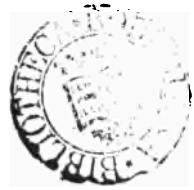
The Rev. F. R. Barry said, "What was God really like? What proportion of Christians would be prepared to answer that challenge? They were not certain of what they meant by God. That was what

was paralysing the Christian message of to-day. We must cease to worship the cold remote God of conventional piety, and rediscover the God of the New Testament.

The Archbishop of Dublin said, "We had thought of God as a great, aloof Sovereign, looking down from above; one who might, if He chose, intervene to relieve us from our sufferings by annihilating the conditions which imposed them. That was not the meaning of Omnipotence."

The Rev. J. K. Mozley said, "The war exploded much popular religious thinking. . . . The demand for theological restatement grew loud."

It is with the hope of helping some among us to see that "the living theology" of to-day is to be found in Christ's thought of God, which has been too long obscured from us, that I venture to publish this volume.



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SERMON I

ABSTRACT OF SERMON I

THE need at this time for teaching the highest Christian conception of God. Christ's teaching must be our starting-point and standard. Its broad outlines familiar to us; but associated with other and incompatible conceptions. We must think out Christ's thought of God for ourselves from a study of Christ, as His disciples were trained to do. Our present conception of God, how acquired, and how it has grown. Our debt to the Old Testament. But its teaching not final. Christ's more spiritual thought condemned by the Sanhedrim as blasphemy. Our Church has still not fully assimilated it. How to approach its study. Not simply deduced from texts, formulated on authority and taught, but seen as the motive and root of all Christ's life and teaching: an inference from knowing Him.

SERMON I

Job xxiii. 3.—O that I knew where I might find him.

A good many years ago some members of one of the Colleges in Cambridge were holding classes for men in the town in literature and history. At the close of one of the courses the lecturer invited the men to suggest subjects for the following term. After a pause of silence one of the men shyly muttered something inaudible. The lecturer went down to him, and asked what he had said. It was this, "We want you to tell us something about Jesus Christ."

Now I believe that if a similar offer were made to-day to any congregation a good many would say, "We want you, sir, to tell us something about God." I say this because for years past, and

specially of late, I have noted that when thinking people talk or write about the difficult questions involved in faith, they come, sooner or later, to the fundamental question, "What is the truest conception we can form of God?" "Tell us about God, Padre," is what soldiers on service again and again said to their chaplains. "If God," they say, "can do all things, as we have been taught to believe, He could, and if He were good He would, have prevented the wickedness of this war. In the Bible," they often say, "we are taught that God acted visibly in human affairs. Did He do so? Has He ceased to do so now? Tell us about God, Padre. What is He like? and what does He do?"

It is a very difficult subject, because of the limitation of our faculties and our language; and it is those who best know how it has occupied the thoughts of every age and nation, how men have "wrestled" with God, resolved to know His name and nature; those who best know how

varied men's conceptions of God have been, and how limited are their powers of thought and expression—it is they who feel most strongly how difficult it is. But we all, in varying degree, feel the difficulty. "Is God something like a man?" every child has asked. For in our childhood we could not think of God except as a sort of great invisible man, somewhere in the sky—a man both powerful and good; and year by year we have insensibly dropped some part of this our early conception of God, until we scarcely know what is left, or whether anything is replacing what we have lost. And we all know that some people find nothing left; and are driven sadly to the conclusion that we can know nothing about God, even if He exists at all. Others are driven into indignation and contempt at what they have been taught about God. The world is longing for some simpler creed, some deeper satisfaction for its emotional needs and its intellectual cravings. We know also that not a few

faithful, devout and humble souls among ourselves are perplexed to know what the Christian conception of God really is. They share the thought of the soldier in hospital who said to his chaplain, "I am a Christian all right, Padre; it is what the parsons say about God that stumps me."

In a word, we all know that many people, young and old, want help to think about God; about God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We are oppressed by the need of belief, and the difficulty of believing. I mean therefore to try, difficult as it is, to express as simply as I can what I have come in my old age to believe that Christ thought and taught about God, and what He deliberately abstained from teaching. Christ's teaching must plainly be our standard to which we must always refer. It is not possible to rise higher than that; and we are still, assuredly, far from having exhausted its length and breadth and depth and height. This subject will then occupy my Sunday morning sermons for some weeks to come.

Happily we all know well the broad outlines of Christ's teaching about God. They stand out clear and firm. That God is "our Father in heaven"; that He loves us as His children; that He has so shewn Himself to us in Jesus Christ that from studying Jesus Christ we may know much of God's nature and character; and that God's Holy Spirit, a Spirit of Love and Truth, is present in our consciences to guide and instruct us. This we all know. This is the familiar sum and substance of Christ's teaching about God. If we could keep firm hold of this, and keep it free from non-Christian thoughts of God added to this and obscuring it, and fit it in with other assured knowledge as it grows, we should need no more. This is our goal.

You will note, however, that what I have just said does not tell us under what form or mental image Christ thought of God as His Father in heaven, nor does it suggest how we ought to think; and we want to know that. Men cannot do with-

out some conception of God, as is shewn by the fact of idolatry and the age-long efforts to construct theologies. Images, material or mental, to present God to our minds, imperfect as they must be, seem to have been and to be necessary.

But further, we all know that it is not enough to be *told* what we ought to think. It may be some help, but it is not enough. What we are *told* lies on the surface of our minds. It is like the reflection on a mirror. It does not penetrate. We may have been told about God and Christ and the Holy Spirit a thousand times without its taking the slightest root in us. We all know that. For the fact is that we only know, only really know, indeed only really believe, what we have thought out for ourselves, at our own pace, in our own way, from our own experience. Belief, real belief, is therefore a plant of slow growth. Good teaching consists in interpreting and expressing and consolidating what has been already suggested by the learner's own experience, and that becomes belief.

And this was Christ's way of teaching. He did not begin by telling His followers who He was. And they did not at first know. He left them to find out. And except to rebuke some of their crudest thoughts He told them very little about God till His last hours on earth, when some of them were prepared for His fuller revelation by what they had already begun to discover in Him for themselves. Even then He left them no creed, no formula. He told them to go on learning, keeping their minds open to the influence of the Spirit of God which would be in them.

And so I warn you at the outset that you can only learn Christ's thought of God, not by being simply told what it was, in sermons or in books, but by studying Christ; living as it were with Him, loving Him, trying to follow Him however imperfectly, listening for the voice within, and humbly learning more day by day. We must, in fact, go through all the stages of learning that His disciples went

through. Nevertheless sermons and books may be of some use as suggesting or guiding thought.

Let us then, in beginning our study of Christ's thought of God, think how each of us has learned what we know, or believe we know, about God, and how far we have got in our lesson.

As little children we first learned by our senses about things which we could see and handle—mere *things*. Very soon we found that some things were alive; and we got the experience of that marvellous and interesting mystery—*life*. And then we found that some living things, mother, father and others as well as ourselves, have something more than life. Of course we had no name for that something more. But we were in touch, in communion with them: we understood something of them, and they of us. They could express themselves to us, and we to them. These are *persons*.

In the early ages of man on the earth, perhaps hundreds of thousands of years

ago, men made these simple observations, just as each of us has done; and then the thinkers among them went a step further, as we do, and asked the question, How did this world, and its living creatures, and its men and women come into being? And all races of men, of all ages, as far as is known, have felt sure, as we feel, that there must be some great invisible Power, a Being or Spirit, who created the world and is present in it; and that Being they called God. And men have felt equally sure that we are in some communion with God; and that means that He has the quality with which we get into communion. He must be in that sense a Person.

The history of religion is the long story of man's desire and resolve to get into communion with God, in the conviction that it is possible. That resolve and effort, and the communion with God that has rewarded them, have increased men's spiritual sensibility and powers of thought; and so the knowledge of God has grown,

and is still growing. It is so with the world as a whole; it is so with each of us. God is being continually found by those who seek to know Him.

By what chief historic stages have we come to our present conception of God? Of all the nations it was Israel, that gifted Jewish race, or their still earlier ancestors, who discovered that morality was of the nature of things; they therefore formed a nobler conception of God than had been reached before that day. He was felt by the patriarchs and lawgivers and prophets of Israel to be a God of righteousness. That was the new and distinctive thought they added. We inherit it, and must hold it fast. God was, however, still conceived by them at first as He is by little children, as a very human God, with the tempers and faults of men. He was revengeful, jealous, pitiless. He required to be approached in fear and self-abasement. He needed to be propitiated by sacrifices of blood: He must be approached through special channels and priesthoods.

He was very unlike that "Father in heaven" whom Christ knew.

But God was conceived by them as holy and righteous. That was the great step up. Below the tangle of this world they saw a central core of righteousness. How noble, inspiring, magnificent was the teaching of their prophets and poets; and how slowly, reluctantly, imperfectly the nation admitted these devout and spiritual thoughts of God to modify their primitive and material conceptions, is what we read in the Old Testament. It is a stage in the growth of religion. "First the natural; after that the spiritual."

But we must always keep in mind that the Old Testament shews us only what was the highest conception of God dawning on men in the twilight of revelation before Jesus Christ came. He put before the nation a more spiritual conception of God, the fulfilment of the finest spiritual teaching of their prophets and poets, and very unlike the lower thoughts which had replaced it in the

accredited religious teaching of His own day. Christ put this before their teachers, and they would none of it. They called it blasphemy; and so they crucified Him. There is the tragedy. Their debased theology had strangled their religion. They would not give up their mental idols; and Christ's conception of God was incompatible with those idols. So they crucified Him.

Now all of us have necessarily had our own childish conceptions of God, derived largely from the Old Testament and consecrated to us by it; and we, like Christ's first disciples on earth, may have been slow to see that Christ superseded some of them. The perplexities of our time about the thought of God are largely due to our retaining some beliefs which Christ refused to sanction, as if they were an essential part of our Christian Faith. His disciples long retained the old thoughts, you will remember, and He rebuked them. "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." "How is

it that ye do not understand?" May it not be so with some of us? May it not even be so with the Church as a whole? Has the Church yet learnt all that Christ came to teach? It is part of our duty as teachers, part of our spiritual education as learners, to grow out of what Christ put away or ignored, and to try to grasp the more spiritual thought of God which Christ puts before us.

This then is what we have to study —*Christ's* thought and teaching about God. It is a great subject. How shall I approach it?

The way that first suggests itself is, of course, to take our Lord's few recorded words, and build them up into what seems His conception of God, into a reasoned and formulated theology. But however well this might be done it would not be convincing. It would be my building, not yours: it would only be my telling you something. It would lie detached, as I said before, on the surface of your minds, and be forgotten to-morrow.

The truer way of teaching is to start from what every one already knows; so that each one shall, out of his own knowledge of Christ, build up for himself Christ's thought of God. Then his knowledge will be rooted, vital and unforgettable.

To-day there only remains time to say that there are three such facts about Christ's teaching which every one here really knows for himself: three pieces of simple, solid and important knowledge. I merely name them now for you to think over.

First, that Jesus Christ did introduce a new standard of morality into the world, as the will and law of God, unquestionably far higher than anything that had gone before.

Second, that He similarly gave the world a new standard of worship of God.

Third, that He similarly transformed the ideal of right relations between individuals and classes.

Starting from these three important

and undisputed historical facts — three great and permanent advances in religious standards and ideals—we cannot help inferring for ourselves that Christ must have had a very different conception of God from that which the Jews of His day had. If His teaching on these central practical subjects so differed from theirs, so must also His thought of God have differed. And from that teaching we cannot help inferring much as to Christ's thought of God, both what it was not, and what it was.

It is to this inference then that, first of all, I invite your serious thought.

SERMON II

ABSTRACT OF SERMON II

CHRIST'S conception of God differed from that of the Jewish teachers of His time. The nature of the difference may be partly inferred from His teaching. *First*, on morality. The stress He laid on "Thou shalt," contrasted with "Thou shalt not"; on love instead of fear; on right thoughts contrasted with abstinence from wrong actions, points to a more inward conception of God. *Second*, on worship. This difference less familiar because few realize the popular conception of worship held by the Jews at that time. Some illustrations from the Mishnah. This contrast also points to Christ's conception of God as more spiritual. *Third*, on relation to fellow-men; mutual service to be our ideal, based on possession of common spiritual life. All these teachings which are the framework for Christian life sprang from Christ's thought of God. If our Christianity is weak, may it not be that our conception of God is not quite that of Christ's?

SERMON II

St. Matt. v. 21.—Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time . . .; but I say unto you.

The text will remind you of the familiar fact of the differences between Christ's standards of morality, worship and human relationships, and those of His age and nation. To these differences I alluded very briefly last Sunday as likely to help us to understand something of Christ's conception of God. This morning we will first remind ourselves with a little more detail of these familiar differences, and then see to what conclusion they lead us.

First, of Christ's teaching about morality —that is, about wrong and right.

Every one knows that while Christ relaxed none of the old prohibitions of the Ten Commandments, He "fulfilled"

them; that is, He developed them and added to them in more ways than one. For example, the old law took the form, "Thou shalt not." He added, "Thou shalt." Now, have we quite realized what a very great step this was in the moral and religious education of the world? "Thou shalt not"—"Don't do this," "Don't do that," is the law of the nursery, as every one remembers. It is always reminding the child of its naughtiness. It marks a great advance for any one when his eyes are opened to see that a far higher rule of life consists in "Thou shalts." This reminds every child of its capacity for goodness. That is the appeal which brings out all that is best in every one. See what it is doing to-day for boy-scouts and girl-guides. It is one of the open secrets of a public school. It is the "Thou shalt," for the good of the house and the school, that makes a man out of a child. Think what the adoption of "Thou shalt" as the motto of life, in place of the old repressive "Thou shalt not," has done for

girls and women during the war. "Thou shalt," with an appeal to principle, is the education of individuality, of independent thought. It is spiritual emancipation. It gives free play for the Divine in manhood and womanhood to express itself. It puts religion far above the plane of fear, and lifts it to the plane of love. It marks an immense advance.

Every one, I say, knows that this is a mark of Christ's teaching, not in the Sermon on the Mount only, but also in His parables. No fault was found with Dives for what he did. He broke no laws: he was an eminently respectable citizen. His only fault was that he left undone, for Lazarus and others, what he ought to have done. And, similarly, in Christ's parable of the Last Judgement the final condemnation is based on what is left undone; we cannot forget the words, "Inasmuch as ye did it *not*."

I do not say that we have all learnt this lesson: we have not. But it was something startlingly new. It was plainly

meant to alter the standard of religious life, and to a certain extent it has done so. But my point to-day is that it implied a different theology. It sprang from Christ's new thought of God, and where understood and accepted it has altered men's thought of God. Christ plainly no longer regarded God as He seemed on Sinai, a terror to wrong-doers, but as a great Inspirer to active good. The introduction of "Thou shalt" into the forefront of morality ought to have transformed men's thought of God more than it has yet done. It throws on men the initiative of virtue.

And Christ, as you will remember, developed the old standard of morality in another direction. In addition to forbidding the wrong act He forbade the wrong thought. It was not the crime, which the law can deal with, that came first with Him, but the sin, the wrongness in thought, that came first.

That development revolutionized our standard of judging ourselves. It demands holiness instead of respectability. And re-

spectability is a very different thing from holiness. Again I do not say that we have learnt the lesson; but we know that we must learn it if we would live in the spirit of Christ. This difference also points to a more spiritual thought of God, a loftier theology introduced by Christ.

Let us now think of another revolution Christ made—that in the idea of worship of God.

This is less familiar, because few of us have enough detailed knowledge of what the authorized national worship of God was like in Christ's day, even among the Jews, to realize what a revolution it was that Christ wrought. We get in the Gospels a few glimpses of Jewish worship: we read a few allusions to sacrifices going on in the Temple—killing animals as a mode of approaching God; a few allusions to rules about the Sabbath, rubbing ears of corn in one's hands being unlawful, for example; about clean and unclean foods; about washing hands and cups and similar trifles as religious duties.

But most of us do not know enough of all this to realize that this was the authorized conception of the service due to God; that the professional teachers had relegated to a secondary place the grand words of the old prophets; and that they had reverted to childish and almost heathen conceptions of God. It is a ceaseless danger. Routine and externals are so easy a religion; spiritual effort is so hard.

Let me digress for a few minutes to give you some information about Jewish religion of that day and how the facts are known. There exists an ancient and voluminous Jewish treatise called the Mishnah, which gives a detailed account of what the scribes and lawyers taught at about the time of our Lord's earthly life. And the scribes and lawyers were the only professional teachers. The priests in the temple kept up the routine of sacrifices which God was believed to require. But they did not teach. They performed ritual acts. It was no part of their duty to inspire men with the love of justice and

mercy and truth. They performed the acts through which men could approach God.

And in Christ's day there were no prophets. Prophecy—that is, public, practical, moral preaching, unprofessional, by persons outside the priesthood, called by the inner voice alone—prophecy had died out, or had been killed out for centuries past. The ever-present voice of God in the hearts of the people was not recognized. The scribe and the lawyer were the sole authorized teachers in synagogues and schools and books. The priests had entire control in the Jewish Church.

Naturally, in the hands of these professional teachers worship came to consist in ceremonies in the temple, and in the observance of minute rules for conduct in every detail of life. The rules were professedly based on their ancient Mosaic law, but, in fact, consisted of remembered decisions of great rabbis or lawyers of the past: what in England is called "case-law"; and what the Jews called "the

tradition of the elders." And the people were sedulously taught that these "traditions," the voice of the Jewish Church, were of the very highest importance—more sacred than even Scripture itself. "He who interprets Scripture," says the Mishnah, "in opposition to tradition has no part in the world to come."

A specimen, however, of the rules of the Mishnah may help you to realize what those teachers must have thought God was like, when they laid down, as having His sanction, such ridiculous rules. How unworthy such teaching must have seemed to pious souls longing for some communion with God! How incredible to the more truth-loving and philosophic minds among them!

I have never myself handled the Mishnah, but I quote from a late scholar-bishop, Bishop Moorhouse, who studied it at first hand. I will take a part of one small section, giving rules for observing the Sabbath.

The question is proposed, "What may,

or may not, a man do on the afternoon before the hour of sunset when the Sabbath begins?" The general answer is that he may begin no work which is not sure to be finished before the Sabbath begins. Then follow applications to details. Here are a few. A tailor, walking out in the afternoon, must not carry his needle with him. For the sun might set before he got home again, and he would then be carrying a burden on the Sabbath. So a scribe might not carry his pen.

Of course, as a general principle, no work might be done by men or by animals. But what of the forces of Nature? Might they be set to work? That is a fine point of principle. And the answer is, No; and several illustrations are given. Vegetables might not on that afternoon be put to soak in water; for the soaking might accidentally go on after sunset, and then the water would be doing work. A net might not on that afternoon be spread for birds; for if it chanced to be left out too late it might catch a bird, and then the net would

be doing work. An egg might not be put into the sand to be cooked by the sun's heat for the same reason. Some difficult practical problems arose. Might knots be tied on the Sabbath? The general answer is "No"; but an exception is made for sailors and camel-drivers; but they must on the Sabbath make knots which can be untied with one hand. Women, however, were mercifully allowed to tie their cap-strings.

That is enough. I have given it you that you may partly realize to what utter triviality the religion of sincere men may and does sink when it is based on an unworthy and false conception of God.

Now, put side by side with this our Lord's teaching. He does not undervalue the discipline of careful and reverent obedience. "These things ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone"; and "the other" were the weightier matters of the law, judgement and mercy and faith and the love of God. What must we infer from this startling contrast? Must it not be that Christ had a wholly

different thought of God from theirs? Was it not because of this difference that He taught that the service of God must be different from theirs? That is the only possible conclusion.

It must, of course, not be thought that the religion of the Jews at that time, or of any Church at any age, can be summarily described as all of this type or all of that. There were among the Jews of our Lord's day men and women of lofty thought and faith; and among the multitudes of all classes not a few whose natural piety, the Spirit of God in their hearts, suffused their lives, unhelped and unhindered by their supposed beliefs. But it would be true to say that the orthodox religion of the day had little to inspire the love of God and an ardour for righteousness in the less thoughtful section of the people; and it repelled many of those who reflected more deeply. It was at such a time that Christ came; and it is at such times, and this is such a time, that fresh depths are found in His teaching.

And there is the third difference in Christ's teaching that I briefly alluded to last Sunday—the difference in attitude towards our fellow-men. Christ declared that respect, mutual service, brotherhood, love, ought to take the place of indifference and competition and strife for mastery. When He said, "So it shall not be among you," He announced a new social, industrial, political, international, practical principle of infinite importance, of which the world is only beginning now to see the possibilities. This also plainly shews Christ's thought of God as a Life and Spirit, inspiring every human soul, and therefore demanding for every human soul our respect and reverence and love. We shall never wish to recur to the old elementary morality, the old sacrificial worship, the old hostile relations of men and nations to one another. As little ought we to wish to cling to the old thought of God from which they sprang.

What then, finally, are our thoughts of God? That is the important question.

Are they those of Christ? Do they inspire in us Christ's thought of religion as glad, mutual service? or do they make us content with the old and easier standards of a more external service? There is the test whether we think rightly of God.

The early and the backward races of men, little children, and those who are not stimulated by temperament or education to think, can only picture and speak of God as an object in space and time. But as human language and thought advance so as to include abstract conceptions which have no relation to space or time, such as holiness, righteousness, truth, love, wisdom, purpose, then it is in terms of these that men rightly begin to conceive of God as Spirit, and Love, and Goodness. So it had been among the prophets and poets of Israel, and with a few great thinkers of India and Greece. So, above all, it was with Jesus Christ. But among the Jews in Christ's day the thought of God had reverted, as I have said, to crude forms. They could not live in the high and rarefied

air of the spiritual thought of God, and had fallen helplessly back into the mechanical worship of idols of their own imagination, their temple worship and national exclusive privilege. Mental idols are our danger also.

How is it with us? Here, be assured, is our weakness as a Church. We long for positive statements, clear rules, "definite teaching," uniformity in Faith and Order. But that is to confuse definiteness with truth. For if God is Love and Light and Holiness and Goodness, we cannot confine Him in positive statements, or define His worship in clear rules. We must worship Him in Spirit. "Little children," said St. John in his last words to his loved disciples, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols."

SERMON III

ABSTRACT OF SERMON III

RÉSUMÉ of first two sermons. But Christ came to do more than inspire higher morality, worship and brotherhood by His revelation of God's nature. He came to save men from their sins. That His central purpose. The representation of salvation as a transaction for man's escape from punishment arises from the Jewish and Mediæval conception of God. Christ's conception of the awakening in man of the sense of the Divine Life indwelling in him as the salvation from sin obscured by this. Mediæval theology needed by the mediæval world; but the world now calls for Christ's more spiritual teaching.

SERMON III

St. Luke xix. 10.—The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

I said in the first of this course of sermons on "Christ's Thought of God" that the true way of putting that thought before you was Christ's own way—that of leading each one to build up for himself, out of his own familiar knowledge and experience, what that thought must have been. Thus every one's knowledge is his own—rooted, unforgettable, vital. Then also some day the few but ever-memorable words of Christ about the nature of God will flash out in all their illuminating power. We get to know the mind of Christ by living much with Him, and seeing how He taught.

In the second sermon I shewed that the vast differences, with which we are all

familiar, between Christ's conceptions of morality, worship and human relationship, and those of the ancient Jewish and Roman world, must have arisen from some widely different thought of God. The tree is known by its fruits: the fruits, Christ's teaching, were very unlike the fruits in Jewish teaching; so must the tree, His thought of God, His theology, have been very unlike theirs.

Now to-day I want to remind you of yet another great item of knowledge that we all possess about Christ; a deeper, more personal fact about Him; one even more illuminating as to His thought of God. It is the greatest of all. How shall I put this to you? I will put it thus.

We all feel, I suspect, that it must be an incomplete and superficial account of Christ's teaching about God if we only say that He lifted higher our standards of morality, worship and human relationships. He did this, it is true. He did it as no one else ever did it. But we feel that in saying this we have somehow only

touched the surface. These are among the great results, the incidents, the by-products of His teaching. What was the central aim, the great result of His coming? What was the unique step taken by Christ in the spiritual education of men?

Behind all these effects and by-products there is, we all feel, one supreme aim and one supreme result. He came to *save*. That is the world's verdict. And He does save. It is salvation, redemption, that is central. That is our first and last and our deepest association with Christ. "He came to seek and to save that which was lost." "He shall save his people from their sins." "For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven."

We may be quite unable to define what being "lost" is, or to describe how Christ saves us, or what He saves us from; but most of us know as a fact that all else seems superficial compared to the tremendous experiences of some individual lives: experiences of sin and despair, followed by new hope; opening of the eyes; uplifting

of the soul, new realization of the meaning of Christ: and this going on through all the Christian centuries from the hour of the penitent thief down to this very day. Salvation, redemption, name it how we will, is felt by us to be the unique and characteristic result on individual lives, and therefore on the world, of Christ's coming.

We must form for ourselves some way of conceiving and picturing that salvation. I have lately been reading letters written from our monastery of Worcester 600 years ago. They deal with the business surrounding monastic life. One of these letters comes into my mind. It was from an old monk here, John of Harley, to his youngest brother in the monastery of Netley Abbey. He had gone wrong, very wrong. But he had been sought and found, as the old monk reminded him, by the Good Shepherd; he had been carried back in His arms to the fold; loved, forgiven, saved. It is the ever-recurring story of the Prodigal Son. Such salvation is the

very core and heart of the Gospel. We come across it in an old monastery. Few of us have not come across it in private life.

Can we in some degree understand and explain it? How does Christ save us? and what from? It must be possible to give answers, at once simple and true, to such obvious questions. And nothing will so help us to understand what Christ thought about God.

The old thought of the method by which Christ's life and death saved us, and what He saved us from, was determined entirely by man's conception of God as a superhuman individual despot, angry at man's disobedience, and threatening dire punishment. A transaction was imagined by which a man who broke the laws of such a despot on earth might propitiate Him and escape punishment. But of this transaction or scheme for escaping punishment there is little or no trace in Christ's recorded words, and belief in it has become impossible to most of us, the analogy with

a human despot being misleading. Christ came not to save men from God's punishment, but from their own sins. He came to make men better; to regenerate, to spiritualize human nature; to bring out its best elements; to lift it out of the animal struggle, by shewing men their own spiritual faculties and true nature.

He did it by incarnating God in Himself, or by taking manhood into God, and thus revealing God's Spirit as present in every soul of man. He came to set men's souls free from sin as He set their bodies free from disease, by infusing into human life the more abundant and invigorating presence of the Life of God. This was primary in His method, and it reveals Christ's thought of God as a Father who loves His children, and therefore without destroying their freedom enriches their souls with His life-giving Presence.

By the very nature of the case every word we use about God's relation to man is a metaphor; and some metaphors taken from kings and courts have terribly dis-

torted and obscured the truth as Christ saw it. We cannot speak even of things of the Spirit as Christ taught them except in words taken from the visible world. Christ came, we say, to "regenerate" man; that is to develop in him a new sort of life; to "spiritualize," that is to give what we call the spiritual in us increased power to overcome the animal in us; to "lift us out of sin," by shewing us that we have the power to become something higher and better; to bring God to man, and man to God, reconciling, unifying, atoning. All are metaphors; we cannot avoid them.

But all this indicates what Christ's thought of God as Spirit must have been, and sets us free from some of the misleading imagery that may have haunted us. It embraces all our Christian experiences, which men describe as conversion, sanctification, redemption, salvation, eternal life, peace, joy, faith, conscious sonship to God. It explains holiness by revealing its source.

Christ's work, to repeat it in other words, was to flush human life from the pure and inexhaustible stream of the Life and Spirit of God. To demonstrate to men that each one of us is a Son of God; to prove that it is not inconceivable that the very Life of God should be shewn more and more in us till we pass into the spiritual world,—this was His earthly work for man. This was His Gospel: this His salvation. And it was for this that "He came down from heaven." Here is another metaphor, from pre-Copernican days. To us it means that Christ was not just one of us men, who by some rare natural temperament and gifts rose nearer to the Divine than any man had done before; a superman, a supersaint, who may, however, yet be surpassed by some profounder philosopher, some holier saint. No: not this. The infinite, the eternal Spirit, God Himself, Love, Goodness, Truth, was shewn in the man Jesus Christ, as life and reason are shewn in all men; to convince men that they too are made in the image

of God, "partakers of the Divine nature" in all its aspects; sharers in the Divine Word; in its life, its reason, its spirit; and can therefore work with God for His far-off aims.

This is Christ's unique place in the age-long spiritual evolution of man. He thus revealed in Himself the nature both of God and man. For we cannot know what God is till we see Him incarnating His Spirit in man; nor can we know what man is till we see him with the Spirit of God incarnated in him.

Of course I am telling you no new thing. Here is nothing of my own, except the words in which I try to express old truths. I believe that all that I have been saying could be found in Athanasius as well as all through the New Testament. But what I have said gives a thought of God less easily pictured in imagination than anything like the Jehovah of the Old Testament. It is spiritual, and therefore needs an effort to think of it; and on that account it has unhappily sunk out of sight

in the popular presentation of the Gospel; and an unworthy presentation of God has resulted in incredulity.

There is an historical reason for this inadequacy in our presentation of Christ's thought of God. The work of the mediæval Church, stating it broadly, was to spiritualize and Christianize the virile barbarians of the North, untouched by Greek literature and philosophy, undisciplined by Roman law. These races found in the Church a schoolmaster to bring them to Christ. And they had to be overawed by the mysterious authority of the schoolroom. But the methods of the schoolroom may be continued too long; and mediæval theology is perhaps not the best religious education for the educated Englishman of to-day.

We clergy have perhaps too much assumed that the world is not yet ready to bear Christ's full teaching; we feed our people still with milk and not with meat. It is a mistake. The world is now ready and hungry for Truth.

Thus the conception of God as Spirit, the Inspiration to good, from being primary in Christ's thought and teaching has largely dropped out of ours; with the result that the very deep faith of some men in such a God is sometimes mistaken for unbelief. For let us acknowledge thankfully that under the silent leavening and ennobling influence of the Spirit of God, myriads of men and women outside the direct influence of the Church are being now, before our eyes, uplifted, redeemed, saved. They are being saved by the Spirit of Duty and Love and Truth, which is verily the indwelling Spirit of God.

SERMON IV

ABSTRACT OF SERMON IV

CHRIST'S conception of God as a Life-Force and Indwelling Spirit not only inferred from His general teaching as preserved in the Synoptic Gospels, but explicitly stated in some of His words. These mainly found in the Gospel of St. John. Why this is so. The first three Gospels, based apparently on contemporary memoranda, present Christ's simpler teaching as it was at the time given and understood. The fourth Gospel gives the total impression finally left by Christ's Personality and His conception of God on a specially gifted hearer, along with some ineffaceable memories. Illustrations from that Gospel of Christ's teaching about God. Not to be treated as paradoxes, but as His highest thought.

SERMON IV

St. John xiv. 8.—Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.

I AM continuing at intervals a connected course of sermons on Christ's thought of God, basing every step in it on your own familiar knowledge. In my first two sermons I shewed that from the new standards of morality, worship and human brotherhood, which, as every one knows, Christ introduced into the world, it was plain that He had some very different conception of God from that held by the men of His time. In my last sermon this became still plainer, when we remembered that Christ came to do far more than raise these standards. He came, as we all know, to save men; to save them from their sins; to uplift men by making

them aware in themselves of their sonship to God; by calling out in them the highest side of their nature, the half-hidden, unsuspected Life of God. He came to flush their veins with the Divine Life, to make a new and spiritual creation.

This thought made it still more plain that Christ's conception of God must have been that of a Life-Power, a Spirit, capable of being partly manifested within men; something altogether unlike the Jehovah of the Jews, or the mythological gods of Greece and Rome, or even of God the Father of our childhood, and of some popular Christian theology.

Thus, even if we had no recorded words of Christ teaching us that God was in a far more intimate personal relation with man than had yet been realized, we might have been sure that He Himself treasured some relatively new and profound and inspiring thought of God. This must have been the fountain of His life. If He had not explicitly taught it, or even hinted at it, to His disciples, we should have counted

it as one of the " many things " He spoke of as having yet to teach through His Spirit, but which they could not then bear. We could not have doubted that He had a higher thought of God, though we had to wait long to formulate it.

In fact, however, such teaching and such recorded words are not wholly absent though they are comparatively rare and fragmentary ; and as a result of this, and of the greater demand they make on thought, they have not always received and held the attention due to them. It is of some of these words that I shall speak to-day, reserving others for my next sermon.

Before I speak of them, however, it may help you much if I explain why these sayings are so few and fragmentary, and why they have an importance out of all proportion to their frequency. The reason arises out of the nature and origin of our four Gospels.

Christ's words, we must remember, are known to us only at second or third or

even fourth hand; through His hearers, and through those who afterwards selected and wrote down what they had heard from others, or had before them in written memoranda. But men only remember and report, in general, what they are interested in, and what they therefore more or less understand; and this may be a great limitation. For we all know that it is not the eye that sees, any more than the telescope sees; it is the mind behind the eye that sees, using the eye as an optical instrument. So it is not the ear that hears, but the mind behind the ear; and this mind, as we all know, only retains what it is prepared to receive and assimilate.

Now the first three Gospels are the most copious and familiar source of our knowledge of Christ's teaching. It is often said that they put before us "the historic Christ." "In them," it is said, "we see Him as He was." Yes: that is true, if we understand this to mean that we see Him as He was to the writers of those Gospels with all their limitations. We

see Him through their eyes. But they, and still more those on whose testimony they relied, Christ's immediate hearers, had been all brought up more or less in the obscuring atmosphere of contemporary Judaism. They saw Christ at first wholly through that medium. Much, they tell us themselves, was hidden from them. Some of His hearers wrote down, and the first three Evangelists had access to, as is now coming to be believed, contemporary memoranda of Christ's words, written as notes at the time, as was customary for the disciples of great teachers, notes therefore not coloured by afterthoughts. These memoranda, invaluable as our chief direct source of knowledge of our Lord's teaching, and embodied in the first three Gospels, preserve mainly those elements in His teaching, whether given to others or themselves, which fitted in with their preconceptions at the time. This limitation must be kept in mind. Christ's popular teaching was necessarily expressed in the popular language of the day.

Nothing else would have been understood by those who "hung upon Him, listening." Christ used the current conception of God as the necessary framework of His teaching; but in His use of it He transformed and purified it. He recalled the spiritual uplifting of their inspired prophets and poets. Never man, they said, spake as He spake.

That Christ, however, sometimes gave a different conception of God, which was beyond the grasp even of the disciples who heard it, is implied by their own words. "Are ye also yet without understanding?" "Do ye not yet understand?" "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of"—are among His words of surprise and reproach addressed to them which they themselves record; and they shew plainly that He had been giving them some teaching for which they were not yet ready, and which they could not therefore report.

Now this is true of the first three Gospels only; and it explains why in

them there is but a very sparing record of any explicit teaching about God apart from parables given to the general public. Even where given or implied it was not fully assimilated at the time; they were not yet ready.

But every one of us also knows that when he passes from the first three Gospels to the fourth he is at once in a strangely different atmosphere. At first the difference is difficult to define; but ere long every careful reader perceives that the fourth Gospel is not so much a chronicle and diary of events and sayings, as a later study, a spiritual interpretation of the mind of Christ; not embodying actual contemporary memoranda of His sayings and doings, but written at a distance of time and place. It is based on history: it contains vivid personal memories of some unforgettable scenes and sayings: it is written by an intimate personal disciple. But—and this is the great difference—it is history written more than half a century after the events; history

written avowedly to convey the total impression that Christ's personality and teaching about God left on an exceptionally thoughtful and spiritually-minded hearer. It is therefore to this one among the Gospels that we naturally turn, in order to find Christ's own conception of God more plainly indicated. It has seemed necessary to explain thus at some length why the fourth Gospel is so specially important in this study.

It is of course not possible in the one or two remaining paragraphs of a sermon to work out from St. John's Gospel Christ's thought of God. It is material for a volume. I do but remind you here of the impression which you have probably already received from that Gospel as a whole, both from the absence from that Gospel of the prevailing Jewish thought of God, and from the pervading presence of a spiritual thought. Christ's words to the woman of Samaria, "God is Spirit"—Spirit, an Inspiration, a Soul-Force, acting on man from within—are the briefest and

clearest summary of a thought never far absent.

Or we might take the appeal of Philip, "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us." The disciples had at last become conscious that their former thought of God was not like Christ's, and was no longer satisfactory or even possible to them. "Tell us," they therefore said through Philip as their spokesman, "tell us what God is like: how are we to think of Him?"

That is the very question many people are asking to-day. "How are we to think of God? How picture His action on nature and men?"

Now study Christ's reply. He did not refer them to the Old Testament, to the stories of the patriarchs and Egypt and Sinai. Still less did He refer them to the worship in the temple and the priests, or to the scribes and lawyers and "the tradition of the elders" which they insisted on. He appeals direct to their own experience. "Have I been so long

time with you," He asked, "and dost thou not know me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?"

Ponder these words well. Ponder that whole passage until you absorb it. It is so outside our common range of thought that most of us, like most of the first disciples who heard it, treat it as paradoxical, and let it lie unassimilated on the surface of our minds. But it will not always remain so.

What can it mean? Of course it does not mean that He, Jesus of Nazareth, sitting at table with them, was verily Jehovah, the Almighty; the same who had appeared on Sinai and spoken with Moses. No. But it meant that the conception men had formed of God, as an imagined quasi-human ruler in the sky, was at length dissolved and had finally to be put away. It was a mental idol, and it lowered the thought of God: it was unworthy, and it was misleading.

Images of God in wood and stone had been long ago forbidden by them of old time. Christ now "fulfils" that law by adding, "And I say unto you, put away your mental idols also." The thought of God should call up spiritual qualities: love, joy, peace, righteousness, holiness, goodness. The conception men still retained of God from primitive times, though it had inspired splendid thoughts and had educated the childhood of the nation, was now obscuring the true thought. The true conception of God as Spirit, the Spirit of Love and Holiness, had been put visibly before their eyes, writ large in Him, the Son of Man, the Representative Man, the Divine ideal of Man. This was to become their thought of God.

So Christ's answer to Philip meant this: "Look for God in these qualities, for the Spirit of God as expressed in these ways. You have seen them in me. Recognize them also as the Spirit of God whereever and whenever you see them. It is

within the soul of man that God, the spiritual creator of all things, is chiefly to be seen: within, in that spiritual nature of man, in which the eternal God is expressing Himself."

It is the thought of Blake's hymn—

> Where Mercy, Love, and Pity dwell,
> There God is dwelling too.

It is the old truth, for all truths are old as well as new. "The Word is very nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart."

SERMON V

ABSTRACT OF SERMON V

ANOTHER *résumé* given after an interval. The very remarkable saying preserved in St. Matthew's and St. Luke's Gospels, that "from henceforth," not as in the Authorized Version, "hereafter," "shall the Son of Man be seated at the right hand of the power of God." Obscured in the Authorized Version. The difference of meaning of the two translations. It throws light on Christ's apocalyptic teaching. Certainly authentic, not a later addition to the first and third Gospels. It confirms the recollection of the teaching as given in the fourth Gospel.

SERMON V

St. Luke xxii. 69.—From henceforth shall the Son of Man be seated at the right hand of the power of God.

I am continuing, whenever possible, a series of sermons on Christ's thought of God: a subject far too important to be wholly passed over in the pulpit, but far too great and many-sided to be dealt with in isolated sermons.

But to deal with a great subject in a broken series of sermons has a great disadvantage. The unavoidable absence, due to holidays and other causes, of some members, and even of whole sections, of the congregation, makes something of recapitulation frequently necessary, if the sequence and teaching of the whole series is to be grasped. And frequent recapitulations are tedious. Let me nevertheless

once more briefly remind you that the question, "What conception ought we to form of God?" has been forced on very many people by the tremendous theological problems raised in their acutest form by the war; that Christ's teaching on this fundamental question must be our standard; and that it has been obscured in the past by the more primitive, cruder, easier, and therefore more popular conception of God given in the Old Testament, and now needs fresh study.

We have seen that Christ came "to fulfil" that conception; that is, to purify and spiritualize it, and in part to supersede it, while He enforced its principles; and that He plainly had a more intimate and spiritual thought of God as a Life and Force working from within, rather than as a Creator and Ruler moulding men from without. And we have seen that this conception inspired His new and lofty standards of morality and worship and human brotherhood. We have seen also how it has uplifted and fired men's souls,

saved them from sin, and is in very truth, when once grasped, the Gospel of salvation.

Then in my last sermon a fortnight ago, I shewed why it is that, while in the first three Gospels we have the record of Christ's simple teaching of the multitudes, and that of His disciples in their early days, given partly in the imagery and popular language of the Old Testament in which alone they could then apprehend it, in the fourth Gospel we have Christ's fuller and final teaching about God as Spirit, dwelling in the souls of men, that highest spiritual thought of God for which the world in general was not then ready, treasured for us and for all future ages by His most intimate and beloved disciple, St. John.

This morning, however, I shall speak of a most illuminating and pregnant text from St. Matthew and St. Luke on the same subject which has been often overlooked.

Let me first recall the scene from which my text is taken—that never-for-

gotten scene in our Lord's trials in which every word He spoke would be noted and remembered by those who were present. Our Lord is standing before Caiaphas and the Council. The story is told so graphically that it must have come from eye-witnesses. Evidence at the trial has been sought for and is wanting, or it is contradictory and insufficient. The Court is baffled. Then Caiaphas suddenly stands up and asks Jesus the direct question, "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" and Jesus answers, "I am, and *from henceforth*"—not hereafter as it is in the Authorized Version, but from henceforth, that is now and for ever after, even now—"shall the Son of Man be seated at the right hand of the power of God." Not *hereafter*, which to our ears means at some undefined future time, but now, from this moment onward, "the Son of Man *is* at the right hand of God."

What could Christ have meant? Did He not *mean* hereafter—at some future

time? So the translators of 1611 who made our Authorized Version reasoned; and they used the word "hereafter," which then may perhaps have been slightly ambiguous, but is now certainly misleading. The Greek is absolutely clear, *ἀπ' ἄρτι, ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν*; the Vulgate translation is clear, *Ex hoc*; Wiclif's translation is clear, "hens forth," "after this tyme"; Erasmus's translation is clear, *Ex hoc tempore*,—all meaning now and for ever after. But the Authorized Version chose "hereafter," following Tyndale, and thus has misled all English readers except a few Greek scholars on an important point until 1880, when the Revised Version restored to us Christ's real words and real meaning—that the Son of Man was *then*, when He spoke, and should be for ever after, in close communion with God, His agent, seated at His right hand.

But what does this mean? To understand it you must remember that our Lord often uses the term "Son of Man" not of Himself personally, Jesus of

Nazareth, but with reference to man as a whole, to humanity, the human race as represented in Himself. The phrase is taken from the book of Daniel, where it refers to something not momentary, not individual, but something continuous, the dominion to be exercised on earth by the saints. Christ is therefore to be understood as speaking before Caiaphas, not of some historical incident, to take place at some future time and in some place, such as His own appearance in the clouds, but of some process in the spiritual world, taking place now and always, in the relation of man to God. He is speaking of a permanent state, not of a temporary crisis; of a process going on "henceforth," not of a phenomenon to take place at some time "hereafter."

Now, to realize this—and it is unfamiliar and therefore not easy — is a great help, if not indispensable for understanding Christ's thought of God, and of His mission to reconcile man to God. The prevailing expectation of the Jews of Christ's time

was that the Messiah would bring in the Kingdom of God suddenly, miraculously. Christ's disciples shared that thought for a time. But He Himself taught that it would come slowly ; not with observation ; that it was already among them, within them. And this saying in the text has the same meaning. It is here *now*.

It is considerations such as these which I can only briefly indicate for you to reflect upon that make the meaning of Christ's words in the text plain. It is the consummation of all His teaching about God, and in particular of His promise that the Holy Spirit of God would in future be the Guide of men. It means that men would henceforth more truly conceive of God as a Spirit ruling them by inspiration from within, in their own selves, than as a Divine Omnipotent Potentate seated in the heavens ordering every detail of their lives from without. And this our own experience confirms.

It was this Divine Spirit which filled Christ's own soul that He pictured as

His Father in heaven, the Father of His spirit in the world of spirit. This is God's universal Fatherhood: this is the reign that is to be of the Holy Spirit in men, made intelligible and credible by the sight of Himself as the Incarnation of the Divine Spirit. In Him we see the Father. This was indeed the taking of the manhood into God.

Caiaphas and his Council had no doubt as to the meaning of Christ's answer. It was the fatal answer: the *responsio mortifera*. It revealed the tendency and result of Christ's teaching. However true to individual experience and prophetic insight, it was incompatible with the established conception of God, and was therefore blasphemy. It revolutionized their theology, as His teaching tended to revolutionize their standards of morality and worship. So they condemned Him, and sent Him to Pilate to be crucified.

I can imagine some one here asking—and he would be more than justified in asking—"Are you not laying undue

emphasis on a single text, indeed a single phrase, in two of the Gospels? Are you not balancing a pyramid upon a point? And are you not assuming in its most pronounced form an untenable theory of verbal inspiration? Moreover, observing that the expression does not occur in St. Mark, is not this phrase more probably a later addition to the story?"

A full critical answer to these questions would take time; but such an answer would be quite convincing. The two Gospels in which it occurs are precisely the two which are least in harmony with it. It was therefore certainly not an addition of later or popular apocalyptic, but quite the reverse, a survival of something inconsistent with it. Moreover, the verbal differences of the Greek phrases in the two Gospels point to independent traditions and memories, or an Aramaic origin of the saying. I can only say here that few sayings of our Lord have in the eyes of scholars stronger evidence than this for their genuineness.

But to return. With this key-thought in your mind that Christ conceived God as Spirit, as most clearly revealed to us as Spirit indwelling in man, not by external acts in time, then the sayings of our Lord recorded by St. John, and the total impression of His teaching conveyed in that Gospel, stand out not as strange mystical paradoxes, but as the simplest expression of spiritual fact. "If a man love me," said Jesus, "he will keep my word; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." In those words we have the very mind of Christ. It is literally true. Here is the source of human goodness and holiness. Here is the foundation of Christian hope for the world. This is the foundation and essence of Christ's theology.

"Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me," said Christ. That is, do not picture us as two individual Beings transacting between us a scheme for man's redemption, but as one Spirit incar-

nating Himself in man, and henceforth raising and purifying man from within.

"In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." A simple statement of fact. Those who love and follow Christ have in them something of a spiritual mind and life which is the mind of Christ and the Life of God. No wonder that the apostles felt it a Divine call to "Go and speak to the people all the words of this Life." That Life which they were to preach as the Gospel of great joy was the indwelling Life of God. And that is the Gospel which the world longs for.

Do not for a moment think that the old conception of God as an external Being, pictured as a monarch with some human characteristics, is not a necessary stage for children, or has not in every age inspired and does not now inspire pious souls with faith and hope and holiness, and give them real communion with God. I know that it is so, and will long remain so. But it is equally certain that this

conception does not now appeal to all, and that it is incredible and repellent to many, who are formulating for themselves with little assistance from us teachers a more spiritual thought of God. Let no one ignorantly call this unbelief. The world is ready for Christ's thought of God.

But let us never forget that God cannot be what any of us little human creatures think Him to be. He is what He is. Let us think of God with utter humility and reverence; trying to grasp Christ's thought, but with all the truthfulness and sincerity in our power. It is by these qualities that men approach to God, and get into communion with Him. And it is only by the fruit in our lives of our communion with God—by love, joy, peace and Christlikeness—that we can judge of the reality of that communion.

SERMON VI

ABSTRACT OF SERMON VI

A QUESTION put to me by a hearer whether it is honest to use in services the anthropomorphic phrases of our formulas while one privately holds the more spiritual view. My answer yes, if the position is intelligently judged. Knowledge of God still confessedly incomplete; but growing, as Christ promised. Faith turns its eyes more to the future than the past; and is fearless because it trusts God's promise of the Spirit. The Church not only an inheritor and guardian of the thought and devotion of the past; but a living organism free to grow and develop, and therefore to discard. Illustrated by history of both science and theology. The recognition of progressive revelation not incompatible with the intelligent use of ancient formulas.

SERMON VI

Eph. v. 9.—The fruit of the Spirit is in all truth.

I had intended to go on in this morning's sermon to shew how the more spiritual conception of God, found in Christ's teaching though now nearly lost sight of, meets our present devotional and intellectual needs, and is indeed the Gospel for all ages.

But one of my hearers has urged on me that something else should come first. He puts his case temperately and well; and I am grateful to him. He had indeed, he tells me, long thought that the popular conception of God is not that held by Christ; that "it represents the primitive imagination of a semi-pagan past rather than either the mind of Christ or the experience of a thoughtful Christian present. But," he goes on to ask, "is not that

popular conception of God so deeply embedded in the formularies, prayers and services of the Church, that to abandon that conception of God for one more spiritual, and yet to continue to use in public those formularies, is, if one wishes to be quite honest, impossible? He himself," he says, "is whole-heartedly a Christian; but outside any Church. He cannot see how it is honest to read new meanings into old phrases, and to profess beliefs, when in the plain and intended sense of the words we use we no longer hold those beliefs. Do I myself think it honest? How do I justify it?"

I do not think I can do this congregation a greater service than by giving my answer to this question. The question is, "Is it honest to read new meanings into old phrases in our services in Church—meanings which their authors never contemplated, and which many of our fellow-worshippers do not read into them?"

I shall answer with an unhesitating "Yes." But the question really intended

could be more precisely and fairly put in somewhat different words, and I will presently restate it. But I say at once that truthfulness comes first: that I agree with my questioner that it is no satisfactory answer to say, as is usually said, that we are all obliged to do this in some instances, because thus only is any common worship, any church, possible. The reply is obvious that if common worship and the existence of a church are incompatible with truthfulness and honesty, then it is better to stand outside common worship and the Church.

I partly agree with him also in saying that the defence of honesty in this matter must not turn on points of learning or of subtle reasoning, but must be plain and intelligible to the man in the street; but my agreement here is qualified by the condition that "the man in the street," and not less the man in the pew or the pulpit, who may judge of the *honesty* of others must at least be intelligent, free from blinding prejudice, and have an open and

sympathetic mind. For the suggestion of dishonesty implies an inconsistency between principles and conduct; and no man, whether in street or study, can judge of that consistency or the reverse without mastering the principles of those whom he is judging. Ignorant he may think us, or confused and stupid—but dishonest, no,—unless he has understood our whole position and point of view; and this requires both candour and an intellectual effort of which all men are not capable. I shall at once try to explain that position and point of view.

Let me ask, Is truth about God completely known by any man or any Church? I suppose that we should all, or practically all, answer, No. I then ask further, Is truth about God, or man's truest conception of Him, to be sought for exclusively in the records of what has been thought in the past? or is it to be looked for as receiving fresh illumination in the present and in the future? If this question had been put to our Lord in the days of His

flesh, how do you imagine He would have answered it? Would He have said, "You have Moses and the Prophets: hear them"? or would He have said, "When the Spirit of Truth is come, he shall guide you into all truth"?

Here is a plain alternative. Is it to be the past to which alone we look? or is it to be also the present and the future? In their choice between these alternatives lies one of the broadest distinctions between the mental outlook of different ages and different individuals in every age. Both types of mind are present in every congregation; and both have their parts to play in building up the Church of Christ. Try to understand and respect both types.

To the one type truth about God has been assumed as already made known by revelation, and given us on authority of Bible or Church. Revelation is conceived habitually as practically complete; and our duty is to guard the deposit: to hand it on undiminished, unchanged. We all belong to this type as children. That type of

mind, if retained too long, cannot but regard with alarm and distrust the continuous modifications that the expression of our Faith is receiving in this, as it has received in almost every, age. A man of that type may feel it his duty to denounce, oppose, even persecute. I think him gravely mistaken. He does not know what Spirit he is of.

Another, like my questioner, who feels that some of the old theology must, for truth's sake, be abandoned, but holds that Church and Churchmen are pledged by their formularies to maintain every item of it unaltered, may feel it to be a higher service of the God of truth to stand outside the Church altogether, than to repeat words he does not believe in their plain sense. I think him also mistaken; but I respect and honour his feeling.

But there is another type of mind, and another view of the duty of the Church; and those who hold it, as many of us do, feel nothing dishonest — not dishonest, though it may be undesirable—in the use

of formularies which have long ceased to express accurately our thoughts.

This is not because our standard of honesty is less strict or high, but because our view of the nature and function of the Church is different. Revelation, we hold, is not complete; it has never ceased; it is still going on. The Church has other duties besides "guarding the deposit." To apprehend this point of view will require from some persons a real effort of mind. Truth, we hold, is not to be sought for wholly in the past. Clinging to old expressions of faith is not the highest expression of man's trust in God. A recent writer[1] has truly observed how seldom in the Bible is faith used of attachment to the past compared with its use for present guidance and future hopes. In the 11th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews—that great chapter on faith—the men singled out are those who had confidence in what shall be, in faith which is not conservative but adventurous. Faith

[1] G. G. Coulton, *Christ and St. Francis*, p. 157.

there is the assurance of things not seen. That is the faith which wins triumphs. "A Church which digs itself in for faith's sake has lost the salt of faith already." That is a true and warning word.

This is the point of view, unfamiliar to some minds and therefore often maligned, which must nevertheless be apprehended by all who wish to see an age of faith. It is the point of view of the type of mind which holds that spiritual truth is hard to win, and far from being yet wholly won, and that it is the duty of us Christians, as agents of God's Holy Spirit, to try to win it. It is the type that holds that truth alone shall make men free; which would test all things, and hold fast that which is good, discarding that which is not good, or willing to discard it. This type is confident in Christ's promise that God is sending His Holy Spirit into the world; that we are in the reign of the Holy Spirit; that Christian theology is continuous and progressive. It is faith at once humble and adventurous; studious of the past,

confident in the future, trustful in the Divine Life in which we live and move and have our being.

To one who sees things from this point of view the Church, the one flock in its many folds, is the special home of the Spirit of God; and it is a sin, from indifference or timidity or over-confidence in oneself, to quench that Spirit. The question therefore is not whether it is honest to reinterpret old phrases in new senses; that does not describe what is being done. It is, May we frankly abandon some old phrases except as historical: using them as what they truly are, milestones on the path of knowledge of God; early intellectual forms in which faith expressed itself, still of devotional value to us all; but forms not intellectually binding on all men for ever; milestones we have left behind?

Are we, to put the alternative otherwise, to regard the Church as an armed guard protecting a citadel from ceaseless and subtle attacks, a guard ready to die

in defence of anything handed down to us; or rather, as an ever-living and ever-growing tree, with roots deep and wide-spreading, immovably fixed in an imperfectly known past; with a solid, sound, unbending stem, and great branches scarcely less unbending; but passing upward into countless more mobile branches and twigs and leaves, drinking in the fresh breezes of the Spirit, rejoicing in sunlight, and sending health and food into every part of the whole organism?

To those who choose the latter alternative the question proposed presents itself in somewhat different language. I restate it thus: Is it honest to remain an active member of a living and growing Church, which has its roots in the far past, and retains its continuity of loyalty to Christ and truth; which declares that all its members are not pledged to any defined identity of belief; which desires ever to grow towards the light? Or more briefly: Is our bond of union not a professed intellectual identity with the past, but the

Spirit and service of Christ in a spiritual brotherhood?

Our answer to this question ought, I feel sure, to be an unqualified yes. And this is my answer to my questioner.

Two further remarks may be made.

First, that this latter type of mind among Churchmen, which looks to the present and the future for the further development of truth won in the past, has been in the last two centuries greatly reinforced both in numbers and in weight of argument. For it is plain to all the world that the immense progress in our knowledge of every other kind except theology has been due to the conviction that knowledge lies before us and not behind, and to the belief in a continued, it may be unlimited, evolution of knowledge. If this conviction has been so fruitful in every other branch of knowledge, why not in theology? That question has not yet been answered.

And the second remark is that in face of opposition and distrust the Church has

reluctantly and half unconsciously been applying this method to theology, and with no inconsiderable results. No one among us past middle age can look back on even his own short experience and doubt that the Church and world have progressed in the knowledge of God. Few of us would, if we could, go back to our old beliefs. Could we now think of the Creator as fashioning this earth and universe as we know it out of nothing, "six or at most seven thousand years ago," as I was taught at school in the standard book of Anglican theology, Pearson on the Creed? Are not our conceptions of the inspiration of the Bible, of the resurrection, of heaven and hell, of the final judgement, of redemption from sin through Christ, of the state before God of the heathen world—to take a few examples—more spiritual, more Christian, than they were? In face of such facts can it be denied that theology, as well as the natural sciences, is progressive?

All natural creation, as far as we know it, has been effected by God by this evolu-

tionary way; either slowly, step by step, or by the fact of the old, *per saltum*, giving birth to the new; and we ourselves have witnessed, and are witnessing, the process of spiritual creation; and consciously or unconsciously we are God's agents in that process. And, I ask, is not this the fulfilment of Christ's promise to send His Holy Spirit? We are taught to believe that we shall be led into all truth. Ought we to be surprised if some of the truths into which we are led are new to us?

To conclude, then, my answer to the question, which may have been in many minds, is that it is wholly honest and compatible with our loyalty as Churchmen to use in worship earlier forms of thought, openly avowing that they do not all now express scientifically, but only poetically, our adult modes of thinking. Out of these roots have naturally sprung, and are still springing, for each succeeding generation, ever more spiritual thoughts of God. It is not dishonest for us clergy to repeat in our most solemn service that God

told Moses that He made the world in six days, or for you laity to repeat with us the *Quicunque vult*, when we make no secret that the beliefs there expressed were only the roots or seeds from which our thoughts of to-day have grown, and when we know that our thoughts of to-day can only be approximations to ultimate truth, and when we hope for further light.

There is no dishonesty in our common worship of our common Lord, however differently in our poor human minds we conceive of Him. He will accept the lisp of an infant or the silence of a philosopher. If we are united in the love of God, in loyalty to our Master, in obedience to the Holy Spirit, we can honestly and humbly use common forms of prayer and faith and praise, and be the better men for our joint service.

SERMON VII

ABSTRACT OF SERMON VII

The *Quicunque vult*. Obvious contrast between its expressions and some of Christ's words. How we ought to use it; to make its true text, its true translation and its historical origin and purpose familiar to all who use it. It is a canticle or psalm, not a creed. Its origin in the fifth century; its purpose to encourage the faithful in time of Arian persecution. Its minatory verses the development of Christ's words, "Whosoever will deny me before men, him will I also deny." Its faulty text and translation. Why explicit on the doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation. The word Person. We can honestly use the *Quicunque vult* if rightly instructed as to its fundamental spiritual teaching, that God becomes known to man by three voices, those of Nature, Jesus Christ, and His Spirit in man's conscience.

SERMON VII

(*Trinity Sunday*)

St. Luke x. 25.—What shall I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself.

The *Quicunque vult*, v. 1.—Whosoever will be saved: before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith.

St. Matt. xxv. 34.—Come, ye blessed of my Father; for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat.

The *Quicunque vult*, v. 42.—This is the Catholic Faith: which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved.

It is impossible not to admit that there is a violent contrast between these words of our Lord which I have just read, and these words from our Prayer-book which we have just recited. I think it wrong, as well as very unwise, always to pass over such a contrast in silence. As long as it is the rule of our Church to repeat the

Quicunque vult in our services, we clergy ought frequently to teach something about its origin and its meaning; about both of which little is commonly known.

The contrasted quotations I have just read to you contain two answers to the same question, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Christ says, "Love God and your neighbour, and do works of mercy." The *Quicunque vult* says, "Hold the Catholic Faith." Some people harmonize the two by saying that the two conditions are inseparable; that you cannot fulfil either without fulfilling the other. But this is not true to fact. A man may, on the one hand, love God and his neighbour, and be merciful in heart and deed, and not have heard of the doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation; he may even reject both as they have been presented to him: and he may, on the other hand, tenaciously hold and fight for these doctrines, and yet be a hard, unloving person, of a quite unchristian spirit. If we must choose between Christ's

answer and that of the *Quicunque vult*, and we can scarcely avoid choosing, there can be no doubt, I hope, which we shall take as the true answer.

Why then do we on Trinity Sunday, and on certain other days, repeat our *Quicunque vult*, or rather, in what spirit and in what sense ought we to repeat it? That is the question which I wish briefly and plainly to answer this morning. It plainly bears closely on the great subject on which I have lately been preaching—Christ's thought of God.

As every one knows, there are many people who dislike the *Quicunque vult* extremely, and would banish it utterly from our services, and even from our Prayer-book. I am not one of those people. But I have often urged that it ought only to be used if it is clearly and frequently spoken of in the pulpit, and that a new translation, and notes on its origin and meaning, are much needed. For there is nothing in our Prayer-book which has lost so much from its erroneous popular name,

its mistaken text, its misleading translation, and its being read apart from its history. These are the points to which I invite your attention first, and then you will see its true meaning. I will be as brief as I can, but it is a great subject.

To take its name first. It is generally spoken of as the Athanasian Creed. It was not drawn up by Athanasius, and it is not a creed; nor was it put forth by a Council of the Church. It is a canticle, a psalm, a hymn. And the difference is not merely verbal; it is to be read as poetry, not prose. Note that the *Quicunque vult* differs from the creeds, and agrees with Psalms and Canticles on all these five points that follow. It does not begin with "I believe." It is divided into verses. The verses are pointed for chanting. It retains as its name its first words in Latin, like the *Te Deum*, the *Nunc dimittis*, the *Beatus vir*. And, most important of all, we sing the *Gloria* at its close. The *Gloria* consecrates to Christian use psalms which are of pre-Christian origin, and some

of which contain what is quite unchristian in spirit. We are to get from them what we can; transmuting by the spirit of the Gospel whatever in them lacks that spirit.

By all these marks the *Quicunque vult* is a canticle or psalm, a poem; and so it was called for a thousand years. It will mislead you if you think of it as the Athanasian Creed. I ask you always to think and speak of it as the *Quicunque vult.*

I will speak next of its history, as this shews the importance of a more correct translation and text.

The fifth century after Christ was a time of terrible suffering in Europe. The Catholic Christians of the south of France in particular were suffering from invasion of enemies, and consequent famine, pestilence and ruin; and also there were earthquakes and floods. Men's hearts failed them for fear. Then first was said in solemn processions the familiar petition in our Litany: "From lightning and tempest, from plague, pestilence, and famine, from battle and murder, and from sudden death,

Good Lord, deliver us." And the horror of all this was intensified by persecution in the name of religion. The invaders, the barbarians of the North and East, had adopted a nominal Christianity known as Arianism. They denied, however, the Divinity of Christ and the Divinity of the Holy Spirit; they denied the doctrine of the Trinity as they understood it; and they put to death those Catholic Christians who would not renounce the faith in the Trinity in which they had been baptized.

This Arianism was forcing its way into the south of France, which was Catholic. It was an awful time. And then the *Quicunque vult* was written as an appeal, issued by unknown loyal churchmen, probably from the monastery in the Isle of Lérins, off the south coast of France; an appeal to those persecuted Christians to stand fast in this dread hour of trial. The text that rang in their ears, often quoted, was, "Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." "This," the leaders

cried to the heroic sufferers, " this is your hour of trial. Stand fast. Shew yourselves men. Put your backs to the wall. Save Christendom. You are soldiers of Christ. Listen to what Christ says—'If you deny Him, He will deny you!'" Whatever Christ meant by these words this canticle meant, and no more, when it said, " Whosoever will be saved: before all things it is necessary that he hold fast the Catholic Faith."

It is with this historical background of terrible religious persecution, passionate appeal to stand firm, that we ought to recite this canticle. Does it not throw a strangely new light on it ?

I said it suffered from mistranslation. Assuredly; in any revised translation, we shall read, as I have just said, hold *fast*, not simply hold, the Catholic Faith. To hold is used of a belief, even of a mere opinion: " I hold so and so," we hear said. But to hold *fast* implies tenacity; the refusal to surrender for any intimidation. The word in the *Quicunque vult* which we

have translated "*hold*," wherever it occurs in the Vulgate is translated in the Revised Version, and sometimes in the Authorized Version, as "*hold fast*." We shall therefore in future read, "Whosoever wishes to be saved: before all things it is necessary that he hold *fast* the Catholic Faith"; hold it fast, even if you die for it. If you deny Christ before men, He will deny you.

Then follows an explicit statement of the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation, which they were to defend. "The Catholic Faith," it says, "is this: this and nothing less. Do not be misled by any Arian attempt to persuade you that after all there is very little difference. You are standing up for the Divinity of Jesus Christ, the Son of Man; for the Divinity of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of men. You are standing up for all that Christ came to teach. To surrender these is to surrender all. Hold them fast."

We shall also assuredly see in any revised translation of the *Quicunque vult* another important change. We shall no

longer say that "it is necessary for everlasting salvation that a man believe *rightly* the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ." This lays the stress on *right* belief, on orthodoxy. That word *rightly*, ὀρθῶς, appears first several centuries later in a Greek translation of the Latin original, in place of the word faithfully, *fideliter*, and thus laid emphasis on the need of correctness of opinion, instead of on tenacity. Cranmer and his fellow-translators unfortunately thought that this late Greek translation represented the original, and his mistake has been perpetuated in our Prayer-book, to our great loss.

The *Quicunque vult* was the "Marseillaise" of European Christendom in the fifth century. We should render its spirit if we sang it in procession, quick march round the Cathedral, to drum and fife. Under God it saved Christendom. The Gallican Church remained Catholic, though in much diminished numbers. The Arian Vandals swept through France and Spain into North Africa, then the home of a

learned but unsettled Catholic Church, and overwhelmed it. And when, a century later, the Mahomedan invasion of North Africa from the East took place, the Arian Faith, or what survived of it, had no resisting power in it, and it fell. Mahomedans and Moors drove through Spain into the south of France, and there once more Catholic France saved Christendom. Keep some slight background of history in your memory as you repeat the *Quicunque vult.* It is a Christian song of battle and of victory.

Yes, you say; this may be so. It is interesting as history. But the teaching about the three Persons of the Trinity in the *Quicunque vult*, is this compatible with Christ's spiritual thought of God as it has been stated in these sermons? Can a man, fresh from Christ's words and thought of God, honestly repeat the doctrinal part of the *Quicunque vult*? That is the question.

The answer is, I think, both no and yes. No, if the man we are thinking of

takes the words in their modern and popular sense: yes, if he has learning enough to know what the writer intended. The difficulty turns chiefly, I suppose, on the word Person. "There is one Person of the Father, and another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost."

In our south cloister there is a boss of the late fourteenth century representing the coronation of the Virgin in heaven by the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity, and teaching the eternal honour due to the Mother of our Lord. All the three Persons are represented in human form. In that way in that age did the conception of three Persons so materialize itself. For elementary teaching thought must find some material expression; but no one can believe that this illustration represents in any degree our Lord's thought. To that perhaps St. Augustine came nearer when he described, if I remember right, the Holy Ghost as the love wherewith Father and Son love one another.

What was originally meant by the

word Person? What ought we to mean? This is such an intricate question, involving language and history and metaphysics and psychology, that it would take a volume to explain the attempts of Greek and Latin and Mediæval theologians to understand the Being and Nature of God. My reply to the question must be very short, given in a single sentence; and therefore very imperfect, but true in essentials.

A man can honestly repeat the *Quicunque vult* if he grasps the fact that the word Person does not imply individual or separate existence and consciousness, which our English word Person implies. That word has therefore already been banished from the New Testament in the Revised Version as applied to God. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, chap. i. ver. 3, we used to read that "Christ was the express image of God's Person." In the Revised Version we read that Christ is the very image or impress of God's "substance." It expresses the sense of that verse to say

that Christ shares the Essence and Being of God.

If you look in any good Latin Dictionary you will see that the Latin word *persona* means primarily a mask or mouthpiece through which some one speaks. It is in that sense the word is used. You get a true, though not the complete, doctrinal teaching of the *Quicunque vult* if you understand it to mean that "the Godhead," that is the eternal and spiritual, which we cannot define or describe, speaks to us men in three ways, through three mouthpieces, with three voices. He speaks to us through Creation; He speaks to us through Christ; He speaks to us through our Conscience. These three voices are all equally Divine; all voices of the same God, without us and within, the omnipresent spiritual Author of all. Three voices, one God.

Think of it. First, the natural: the *voice of Creation.* Would that we could open our individual minds to study, and our hearts to feel, how God is speaking to

us in sun and star; in the miracle of life; in the beauty that surrounds us; in the fairy stories of plants and animals. We are always in God's presence, though He is, as Milton says,

> To us invisible or dimly seen
> In these Thy lowest works: yet these declare
> Thy goodness beyond thought and power divine.

And there is the *voice of Christ*, the greatest teacher, moralist, philosopher, statesman, this world has ever seen, the most profound in His insight into truth and the ideals and destiny of man; the supreme Revealer of God. We shall never get a lasting peace, never be rid of struggles and evils and sins, till we learn to live in His spirit.

And there is the *voice within*. The Gospel which Christ taught is that each of us also has in him something of the Divine; that God is his Father, God's life in his veins, and in his spirit, struggling with the animal nature, also God's, which we have to rise out of,—the voice

within, which bids us as brothers serve our common Father.

Here is, in very brief, the lesson of Trinity Sunday: the magnificent, exhaustless manifestations of God in Nature and in Christ, and the dawning manifestations of Him in ourselves and all our fellows.

SERMON VIII

ABSTRACT OF SERMON VIII

THE worship of God conceived as Spirit. Prayer, love, service. How to think of God when we pray to Him as Spirit. What is prayer at its best? Christ's prayers. Our prayers in childhood: how they develop into communion with God. The answers to prayer. Love for God when thought of as the Spirit of Christ. Nature of service to God, when God is conceived as Spirit. Its motive and range increased. Sense of sin deepened. Truer thoughts of God, as Christ revealed Him, the hope of the world.

SERMON VIII

St. John iv. 24.—God is Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

I am going to speak this morning about prayer and love and service as the worship of God in spirit.

It is plain that our Lord, in the words I have just quoted, addressed to the woman of Samaria, is correcting the popular conception of God as a Deity who, like a king, chooses this or that place to dwell in, and must be worshipped there only. God is Spirit, Christ tells us; and as Spirit He is present everywhere. Yet, we remember, Christ Himself pictured God as a Father, spoke of Him as dwelling in heaven, and taught His disciples so to address Him in prayer.

How are we to think of God when we

pray to Him? As Spirit present everywhere? or as a Father in heaven? The two conceptions scarcely seem identical. There are few questions more searching; and few on which, I believe, thoughtful souls more earnestly desire to think truly.

I believe the truth to be this. Prayer in set forms of words, whether in private or united worship, is for most of us, primarily and in general, a state of soul, a submission to spiritual influence, a habit, rather than an intellectual effort. It generates a feeling like the sacredness of an ancient place of worship; it sanctifies, uplifts, soothes and strengthens the soul, by bringing it into God's presence, even when listened to or repeated with little or no close verbal attention. How often have we prayed, with wandering absent minds; but yet not wholly in vain. Is it not so? For this purpose it is essential that prayers must be expressed in forms that do not jar on us; forms not unlike those we are used to from childhood. Some of the phrases may not bear prosaic analysis.

Like hymns and psalms and parts of the Bible, they may provoke the criticism of cool indifferent auditors who are uninfluenced by the atmosphere of devotion. But their effect on those who habitually use them is to purify, elevate and spiritualize. They are and will remain a treasure and a necessity for worship.

But this is a critical and questioning age; and very many among us are trying to get behind the habit and the sentiment and the poetry, and to examine more strictly their own thought of God. They wish, and they are quite right in wishing, to get at the spiritual reality that lies behind the words they use in prayer. It is to them that Christ speaks when He says, "God is Spirit." And they ask whether, when they think of God as Spirit, they can still pray to Him, love Him, serve Him, as so pictured. One cannot think without words. Can one pray to what one does not visualize in some form as external, localized? Can one pray to a diffused Spirit? Can a Spirit hear and

answer prayer? Christ Himself, we remind ourselves, prayed to His Father in heaven. Yet He tells us that God is Spirit. Such questionings are inevitable.

Let us think what prayer is at its best. How can we think of Christ's prayers on the hill-side? They must have been close communion with God Himself, from whom He came forth. He was "in the Father, and the Father in him"; bathed in the Spirit of God; in the bosom of the Father.

With us prayer began when we were children in the thought of God wholly apart from us like an earthly father, but invisible; and such prayers in childhood's forms we must never drop. But they should soon include the thought of the presence of God within; of God's Spirit speaking in our conscience; the ever-present light of the soul. Prayer thus becomes a conscious sharing in the life of God; first for ourselves, and then for all with whom and for whom we pray. We see them all as sharing in God. Prayer is

thus, at its best, the foretaste of the gift of eternal life, of eternal communion with God. It is, in some degree, an anticipation in our own experience of the words of Christ, "I in thee, and thou in me."

We can then pray to God so conceived as Spirit, if we think of prayer as "communion with God." But can we think of such a Spirit hearing and answering prayer? Does not this phrase imply some one external?

This depends, does it not, on what we are asking for. If it is for something external, then we pray to Some One external: if for things of the spirit—to make our will one with God's will—then it is communion with the Spirit that helps and strengthens us. Was not this our Lord's prayer in Gethsemane? And as years pass, our prayers are more and more of this type, and less and less for anything external. With such a thought of prayer we may, with St. Paul, "pray without ceasing": not, of course, in words, ceaselessly asking for something, but always

practising the presence of God. Our prayers are answered by an assurance of His presence.

It is a true saying of George Meredith that "he who rises from his knees a better man, his prayer has been heard."

Worship, however, as I said at the beginning of my sermon, includes not only prayer, but love and service. Is the thought of God as Spirit compatible with love as well as with prayer? Can we love anything so indefinable as Spirit?

We must be very truthful here with ourselves; and it is not easy to be truthful. But when we speak of loving God how do *we* picture Him? It seems to me that we only love God when we think of Him either as Righteousness, the Protector of Right, the Spirit and Source of Light and Goodness and Truth, or as shewn to us in Christ. We can honestly say, "I love God so far as He is like Christ." The picture of Christ in the Gospels—that tenderness and insight, that courage and leadership, that love and strength,—that

picture is irresistibly lovely and lovable. But God the Father, who seems to stand behind Christ, who orders, we are told, all things in heaven and earth, including wars and crimes and loathsome diseases, and fiendish cruelty, and bestial indifference and stupidity, and the awful waste of life —if we think of Him as the Omnipotent Ruler and Orderer of all this—is our feeling towards Him truly one of love. Must there not be something wrong in our conception of God ?

There are many people now who feel this contradiction intensely. They are bewildered : longing for faith, and staggered at the difficulty of faith in the God whom they have pictured. It is driving myriads to live without God—to deny Him.

It is to them that Christ speaks when He says, " God is Spirit." Think of God as Spirit; Spirit fully shewn in Jesus Christ; Spirit leading and inspiring every one of us in the inevitable struggle to rise out of the material and animal which is our origin, into the spiritual and Divine which is our

goal. Think of Him as within us as well as without; suffering with us; suffering most of all when He most fully expressed Himself as Jesus Christ. Think of God thus, and we *can* love Him and believe in Him. We see Him then not as supreme over Natural laws, interfering with them, reversing them at His pleasure, but working through them in us as His agents; as in truth subject to those laws. We see Him as animating our poor, blind and wilful human nature in its struggle, and we can then truly say, I love God.

Lastly follows the thought of service: for worship includes service. Can we be as loyal in service to God conceived of as omnipresent Spirit as when we pictured Him seated on His heavenly throne? Is sin as terrible and hateful to one who has merged the thought of an external Law-giver and Judge into the thought of a living Spirit of Goodness and Love and Power.

These are very grave matters. But I am sure that it restores and confirms the

faith of not a few to bring them out to light, and speak of them openly. It seems to me that the motive to the service of God is greatly intensified; the range of that service greatly widened; and the sense of sin, the self-condemnation for wrong-doing or lack of service, is greatly strengthened.

It is only possible to speak now with great brevity. But I think these three points can in a few words be made clear to all.

(1) The *motive* is intensified. We are haunted by no doubt as to the origin of moral law in the dim past. Did God verily give the tables of the law on Sinai? We may doubt that. But we can *not* doubt that His Spirit, speaking in our conscience, gives the law to us, now, at this moment. The old Stoic moralists knew what it was "night and day to carry one's own accuser in one's own breast"—"*nocte dieque suum gestare in pectore testem.*"

And (2) the range of service is greatly widened. An external Lawgiver can do

little but forbid wrong acts and desires, and threaten punishment. The internal Voice commands right acts and right desires. Not only is a man's duty prompted by fear of disobeying God's prohibitions, but also by the wish to be His instrument for doing His will; and thus fresh and ever-widening fields of service open before him.

And (3) the sense of sin is deepened. Before that inner judge, recognized as God's judgement, no sophistry invents excuses, or doubts, or hopes of escape. Professor Oliver Lodge has been saying lately that "men are not now troubling themselves about their sins." If sin is thought of only as the breach of a law laid down for us by an external Lawgiver, what he says is true; for men find it hard to realize such an external Lawgiver. But never, I believe, has the thought been so universal as it is now, that the world of men has been sinning greatly, missing its way, not seeing its goal, needing a true spiritual revival. Men's sins of blindness

and of self-will and of forgetting the inner Voice are oppressing them.

In a deeper and truer thought of God lies the one hope of the world; and where shall it be looked for except in Christ's thought of God? "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

SERMON IX

ABSTRACT OF SERMON IX

A FULLER statement of what we may believe to have been Christ's conception of God now possible: the fulfilment of Old Testament theology. Some doubts and questions that have reached me from believers. Am I right in representing Christ as abandoning the prevailing anthropomorphic conception of God in the Old Testament? Could the Old Testament have been inspired by an erroneous conception? And further, Is it conceivably left to our time to re-examine the foundations of Catholic theology adopted by the Church? Is it honest in clergy to disturb old beliefs? The advice of Gamaliel. Certain considerations suggested. Historical illustrations of mistaken resistance to new light on truth. The few centuries of Christendom have not exhausted the riches of the revelation of God in Christ.

SERMON IX

Acts v. 38.—If this counsel or this work be of man, it will be overthrown; but if it is of God ye will not be able to overthrow it, lest haply ye be found even fighting against God.

We have now reminded ourselves in bare outline only, which was all that was possible, of the substance of Christ's teaching about God; of His manifest purpose to make men realize that they share the Life of God; and of His latest and most explicit words as to His own deeper thought of God as Spirit. It is now time perhaps to attempt to express this thought somewhat more explicitly, however imperfectly we can follow and reproduce the thought of the Divine Son of Man.

He must have thought of God not as the early races of men, and as we ourselves

as children, thought of Him, as a Being apart from Nature and men, and controlling their operations when it pleased Him to interfere; as a Being in quasi-human guise, with human passions and tempers; a Being to be approached and propitiated by sacrifices and gifts like some king. God was indeed to Him a very real Personality, in closest communion of Spirit—"I in thee, and thou in me"—one who "heard him always"; a Personality in the only essential meaning of personality, that is, possessing the capacity for communion with our human minds; but with none of the limitations of a Personage, or other associations that we can scarcely avoid attaching to the word Person. He thought of God as His Father in heaven; but a Father who was the Spirit of Life and Love and Truth, from whom we and all creation proceed. He thought of men not as the subjects of a remote monarch, but as closer to God than children, sharing His very life and purpose; His agents on earth by whom

alone He can carry out His purpose. He saw mankind as the highest visible self-expression of God; His incipient and potential incarnation, dowered with His love and trust; in personal intercourse with Him, already seated at God's right hand and sharing in His creative processes. And He knew Himself to be a complete incarnation of the Spirit of God, thus uniting and reconciling man and God, revealing the true nature both of God and of man. And He saw in the future, after His removal from the earth by death, His Spirit, which was God's Spirit, "the engrafted Word," incarnating itself more and more in the animal nature and frame and mind of man, subduing the animal by the spiritual, through long ages of struggle working up to the Kingdom of God, when at last the Spirit shall dominate all.

Vague, indefinite, inadequate this description is of necessity; but it may help us to enter into Christ's thought of God. A definition it is not and cannot

be. One cannot define in words the conception of beauty, or love, or holiness: still less can one define God except as the Spirit of all that is good and great and true. Christ revealed His conception of God, not in words, but as a Spirit embodied in Himself. He did not come to destroy the old thought of God, but to shew how much it was capable of, to fulfil and enlarge it, to bring out its spirit, and to shew what its rich metaphors and imagery stood for. He shewed men the truth imperfectly symbolized in their earlier conceptions—the Word that was in their hearts, that inspired their poets and their prophets and their saints. In a word, He did for their theology what He had done for their morality and worship: He developed it, unfolding its spiritual side. And it is thus, through His fellow-workers, that He is winning the whole world to acknowledge Him through the Holy Spirit in their hearts.

Now, for various reasons some of us may as yet feel no need to modify their

early, easy and familiar conception of God; and are disposed to fear and resent and condemn any such considerations as have been put forward in these sermons as disquieting, and sanctioning if not promoting unbelief. And there is reason in what they urge. Can we believe, they say, that Christ so meant to revolutionize the thought of God? Are we to believe that the Psalms, with their exhaustless power of finding us, were inspired by an imperfect, even erroneous thought of God? And if, in truth, Christ did mean this, is it conceivable that the Church has not in nineteen hundred years fully mastered His thought? Is it reserved for our age and future ages to realize His teaching? And finally, is not the whole Catholic Church and our Church of England so pledged by its formulae that one cannot honestly, while remaining loyal to the Church, even consider such new thoughts of God?

Such questions must occur to us all. And I desire to say a few words to any who may be disposed to condemn any

reconsideration or development of what they regard as finally settled. I would entreat them to believe and remember that others, not a few, not less sincere and good than themselves, and not less loyal to Christ, are feeling that their faith in God, as they have been taught to think of God, lacks evidence, consistency, truth to fact, and even morality; and in the cause of truth they have abandoned it, or are abandoning it step by step. It is a matter of profoundest seriousness; it is a religious crisis; and it demands the sympathy of all Christian hearts.

Now, to those who do not themselves feel the need of such thoughts, but who cannot conceal from themselves that others, not only the young whom they may regard as ignorant, do feel the need of searching for the truth about God—to those I venture to say that their attitude ought to be that of Gamaliel in my text, "If this counsel or this work be of man, it will be overthrown; but if it be of God ye will not be able to overthrow it, lest

haply ye be found to be fighting against God." I recommend what Bacon called "the adult suspension of judgement."

Remember, I would say to all who resent considerations as these, that God Himself is very far beyond all human thoughts: that we can never make our thoughts of Him worthy. Reflect that what men are now so anxiously and universally questioning is not at all the existence and majesty of God—that was never, I believe, less questioned—but the propriety and truth of current Christian teaching about Him. Recall, if you can, how greatly the Church's teaching about God has changed even in our lifetimes; and ask youself if it has not changed for the better. Remember, too, that men are not all made in the same mould, and are not in the same stage of spiritual growth. Believe also that there are those to whom some thoughts of God, held by truly religious people, seem so unworthy, so false, and so injurious, that not to deny them openly is in their eyes real unfaithfulness to God. Believe,

in a word, that the search for God is continuous, unfinished, and always finds its reward, and extend your deep sympathy to all who search.

Reflect too, I would add finally, that the charge of blasphemy or heresy or atheism, or at least of unsettling men's minds, has always been brought against those who in any age or country have tried to lift and purify the thought of God held by those around them. They perished, in the eyes of men: but their labours were not in vain; others entered into their labours.

Was Buddha, the Light of Asia, though denounced by the Brahmins of India for not accepting their innumerable deities as conveying his conception of the Supreme God—was he blasphemous?

Was Socrates blasphemous and justly condemned to death because he stood almost alone in not resting content with the accepted mythological gods of Greece?

When Paulinus had preached Christ before King Edwin and his Northumbrian

nobles, and Coifi, the arch-priest of heathen gods, mounted his horse—as you may see in one of the windows of our cloisters—and with levelled spear smote down the idol under whose form they had hitherto worshipped God,—was Coifi sacrilegious, blasphemous, heretical? And if not, why not?

Were all the heretics of the Middle Ages, down to Wiclif and Tyndale, to Cranmer and our own bishop Latimer, rebels against God, or against imperfect and unworthy thoughts of God?

When Servetus denounced Calvin, and Calvin denounced Servetus, and being the more powerful caused him to be burnt alive, were either of these two good men guilty of irreverence to God? No: not to God. They shewed excessive and ignorant confidence in their own imperfect thought of God's nature. They were not honouring God, but gratifying themselves under the plea of honouring God. Shall we be like them?

Was Vanini, as late as the seventeenth

century, an unbeliever? He expressed his belief to his judges in these words: "God is the greatest good; the creator, preserver, moderator; omniscient, omnipotent; the father, king, lord, rewarder, ruler; the beginning, the end, the middle, the Eternal. He alone is all in all."[1] The man who so expressed his faith was condemned by the Church for blasphemy in this his confession. His tongue was torn out by the roots, and he was then burnt alive. But the supreme example is, of course, that of our Lord and Master. Jesus Christ was condemned by the most religious people of His day for claiming God as His Father, and placing the Son of Man at God's right hand.

Those who have wished to purify and magnify the thought of God have always been suspect and often persecuted by those who have no such wish, because they feel no such need. The sin of intolerance and persecution is one to which religious people are specially liable. Be

[1] Max Müller, *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 307.

not any of you therefore found among the traducers, the belittlers, the persecutors in fact, of those who are seeking God. Be not found among those who all unconsciously are fighting against God.

In conclusion, I would say, do not dwell on the threatened loss as it may seem to you of some old and familiar mental image. The loss is only an exchange for something far better, far more helpful: if not at once to you, yet to others who should have your tenderest sympathy. In this thought of God as a Life of the Spirit, diffused in all, from whom as a Father our life of body, soul and spirit has come, is, I am persuaded, the essential truth of the Gospel of Christ: the good news; the ideal, which when clearly seen will draw all men with irresistible power. The Church and World learn very slowly. These few centuries of Christendom do not exhaust the meaning of the world, or the revelation of God in Christ.

SERMON X

ABSTRACT OF SERMON X

In all growth there is a balance of loss and gain. The Epistle to the Hebrews shews the balance of gain in the change from Jewish to Christian theology. A similar balance in the further elimination of the Jewish and Pagan elements in our present theology. Loss and gain in the thought of our relation to God in prayer: loss in vividness of symbols, but gain in learning what they symbolize. Gain from regarding man as God's free agent on earth, and Christ as shewing the Divine in the human, and the human in the Divine: gain in dignity, responsibility, in ideal of service of God. Gain in intellectual clearness from substituting experience for authority.

SERMON X

Hebrews xii. 27.—The removing of things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which are not shaken may remain.

This was the trying experience of the Christian Jews of the first century; and it is our experience to-day. Something is being removed, as having accomplished its purpose; but what remains stands the more clear and firm.

We have all been lifted by the events of the last five years into a higher atmosphere. God has been speaking to us: we have been thinking more about God. We are all, in our degree, forming a more spiritual conception of Him. But we find it hard; and to help you and myself in this difficult work has been the purpose of my recent sermons. Last Sunday I appealed to you to study reverently, sym-

pathetically, in the spirit of Gamaliel, this more spiritual conception of God, which is everywhere present and struggling to find adequate expression; and I did so on the ground of its being a recurrence to Christ's own thought,—thought often obscured by later teaching. That spiritual conception cannot be grasped without parting with some early and familiar notions we have formed of God: they are among "the things that are shaken." But "that which remains" is more clearly seen, and more firmly held.

The Epistle to the Hebrews was written to shew the balance of gain over loss in the great change that came over the faith of a devout Jew who became Christian towards the end of the first century. He had lost his material and beloved Temple and Altar, and his visible High Priest. He had gained what was harder to realize, a spiritual Temple and Altar, and an invisible High Priest. Let us try this morning to think out some of the items of a similar balance-sheet of loss and gain, if the con-

ception of God formed by the early races of men, pervading most of the Old Testament, familiar to ourselves in childhood, and retained by habit and apparent sanction of the Church—if this passes away and is replaced by that more spiritual conception of God as Spirit, Life-Force, about which I have been speaking to you, as Christ's thought of God.

First, what do we lose? We lose the belief in God as a Being who may be induced by our prayers to alter the course of Nature. We cannot without some mental reserve ask Him to send or withhold rain, to avert an accident or a disease. He does not suspend at our request the uniformities of Nature, which seem to arise from a necessity in God of the meaning of which we are wholly ignorant, through which and under which He is educating us.

But we also gain. We gain the conception of a God whose Life and Spirit are in our souls; who will guide us to use rightly whatever the changes and chances of this world may bring. That Spirit will

give us, is giving us if we will use it, wisdom to avert some evils, such as those of disease and accident, of war and famine, of impurity and intemperance, of misgovernment, injustice and revolution, of hatred, jealousy and selfishness. We know that to avert these evils, and to foster the life of brotherhood and love and loyalty, is the work God assigns to us, His children. And He gives us trust in Him that our work with Him shall not be in vain, and joy in His presence whatever befalls us. Thus we gain greatly in our prayers. Prayer becomes concentrated on that which strengthens our sense of union with the Divine, and co-operation with God. When we pray for God's help and blessing for others the inseparable thought is, Can we be the channel for such help and blessing? We shall not ask for the intervention of God in our behalf in material things. We shall ask for such faith, such realization of God within, as will make us secure that no outward accidents can part us from the Love of God, which is our Life.

What else do we lose? We lose the pictures of heaven and hell, and much that impressed our childish imagination; the great white throne, the books open, the pearly gates and golden floors of heaven. These and much else are seen now to be imagery and symbols which, like those of the giving of the law, were necessary in an earlier stage of our spiritual education, but a stage which is passing away from us. Has it not indeed already passed? Nor ought we to regret that it has passed away. For the truths which those figures and symbols stood for, the lessons they impressed on the youth of the world, stand surer than ever for those who look for them. And what are those lessons? They are the eternal supremacy and the final victory of good over evil, of right over wrong. They are the witness of the Spirit of God within, and the ceaseless struggle of that Spirit with the dreadful and persistent solicitation of our own lower nature which we once personified as the Devil.

The losses are these, and such as these;

and even those who feel them most can see that there is a corresponding gain to be won by effort. But, on the other hand, there are gains from Christ's thought of God which are counterbalanced by no loss.

Shall we try to express, however imperfectly, what we gain from the thought of men as becoming conscious of the Life of the Spirit of God in them, inspiring, educating them; from the thought of men as God's free and sole agents on earth, called on to work for His Kingdom on earth—"created," as St. Paul says, "in Christ Jesus unto good works"? What do we gain from Christ's thought of God, not as a Potentate in heaven, but as shewing us His very spirit and self, actually working, living, in human flesh, taking manhood into God, reconciling God and man, manifesting the Divine in the human, and the human in the Divine?

We gain the dignity and stimulus of responsibility. We are no longer servants, slaves; still less automata. We are God's children, all of us, His agents, His friends.

We are lifted in the scale of being; we learn our true rank; we "come to ourselves." The Son of Man is at the right hand of God. We "sit together," to quote St. Paul again, "in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." We gain the right and the joy of giving God the service of sons, not from fear, not for reward, but from the instinct and impulse to give play in our every action to the indwelling Life of God. It is a feeble instinct, but it is there; and it grows with use. It is that which makes life worth living.

It is a call to us to honour our bodies, as in plain truth the temple in which God's Spirit dwells. To us adults it is a call to see that all the children in our cities and villages are so brought up in their infancy and early years that they may be worthy temples for God's Spirit; like the young plants, a joy for God and man to look upon. They are not all so now, to our shame. It is a call to the young to respect their bodies, to make them healthy and vigorous, obedient servants of their will,

weakened by no self-indulgence of any appetite, or unclean thoughts or deeds, or indolence—the sins which stunt or kill the Divine treasure within. We all gain the joy and privilege of working with and for God, the loyalty which sustains us in ceaseless warfare with our lower nature. It increases the interest in life; the sense that life is worth living. If wrong is done, or the right left undone, if danger and disease are not averted, man, and man only, is responsible. There are limits to his power; but we are still far from those limits. What a life it opens to every one!

An old conversation from some book comes into my mind. Some wrong, I forget what, unremedied, was being spoken of as a shame. "'Well, God mend all,' said his Lordship. 'Nay,' replied Donald, 'we must help Him to mend it.'" Which of the two, his Lordship or Donald, shewed the truer understanding and faith in God? Surely Donald.

Christ's thought of God as "the in-

spiration of His Holy Spirit," deepens also our sense of sin; it almost creates it for our sins of omission, which we so rarely think of and repent. Alas for the things we have left undone that we ought to have done! We ought to have helped God, we ought to be helping Him, to mend many an evil.

It is a gain because it places before each one of us, old as well as young, a clear ideal of life and duty which it is never too late to make one's own—to be useful in our life, loyal, to do some service to God. Life becomes not a mere scramble for the means of living. The means of living must be worked for and won, of course. But our vision is always for something beyond them. Success which follows ability will be valued only so far as it helps us to serve God on a larger scale.

Perhaps a still greater gain is that it gives us certainty. It gives us a Gospel of our relation to God which hangs in no swaying balance of historical evidence or philosophic scepticism: it is a Gospel which

rests on what each can find in himself. It rests on experience rather than authority. It is the Gospel that Christ brought to light. Certainty, I say. For the existence of a Spirit of Life, at once natural and supernatural, transcendent but all-pervading, manifesting itself in myriad forms of power and beauty, the highest of which is the sense of right and duties, the faculties of love and loyalty in man, felt in ourselves, seen consummated in Christ, of this we can be as certain as we can be of any fact in science. This Spirit, or some impulse we call by that name, exists: it is struggling with our animal nature. By an act of faith we identify this Spirit with that of God Himself.

If any one replies that this is also among the things that are shaken, and fears that right and wrong, duty and justice, are only human conventions and are passing away, I know of no answer that science or philosophy can offer. We have passed beyond their limits into the region of faith—faith that the impulse that calls for goodness is

the Spirit of God. I know of no answer but that of Antigone in the old Greek tragedy, "This call is not a thing of to-day or of yesterday: it lives eternally, and no man knoweth Him from whom it came."

What else do we gain? It is a long column on the credit side of the account. We gain a rational ground for that brotherliness of feeling, that will to serve and help, in which Christ tells us true religion consists. It is because we all share the Life of God. It is His Life that unites us. It consecrates loving human kindness as the service of God. Without God, it has been well said, the service of man may be only a passing hobby: with God it is the fruit of the Divine Spirit in man. "The fruit of the Spirit," says St. Paul, "is love, joy, peace." And such a spirit will make our united worship in church really uniting, fervent, beautiful. These are among the gains.

This thought of God makes possible a union of spirit along with "differences of administration" and speculation in the

Church of Christ. The foundation of faith is so deep and so wide that all can rest on it side by side. When this thought is the master-thought of life, other things, such as order, are seen in true proportion. It tends to humility, to mutual respect and goodwill, to real unity in the many-membered body of Christ's Spirit on earth.

I might go on to shew how it brings out the power and grace of the sacrament of union in Christ. To some it may reveal a depth of meaning they had not fathomed before. And it gives fearlessness, confidence, happiness, in the pursuit and finding of truth. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." There speaks the real St. Paul. These, like many other words of St. Paul and St. John, will flash out into brighter light and fuller meaning. They can only be understood when illuminated by Christ's thought of God. The New Testament becomes almost a new book.

But it is time to conclude. I commend to you the thought of God as acting in Nature from within, rather than on it from

without; and as willing that man should experience the discipline of the changes and chances of this world as part of his education, so far as he cannot triumph over them and subdue them. I commend you to the thought of God as in man also acting from within, through the Spirit He gives us; inspiring us to rise by communion with Him out of that lower life from which we sprang, and making us His agents and His friends to carry out His will.

Live with this thought day by day; and see if you do not find your mind more courageous, your will to duty more firm, your sense of responsibility more urgent, your belief in God and Christ and the Holy Spirit clearer and brighter, and your love of the brethren and joy in service more uniting.

The things that are not shaken do indeed remain.

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